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## Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Monday 20 January 1997

Standing committee on social development

Funding for persons with disabilities



# Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36e législature

## Journal des débats (Hansard)

Lundi 20 janvier 1997

Comité permanent des affaires sociales

Subventions aux personnes handicapées

Chair: Richard Patten Clerk: Tonia Grannum Président : Richard Patten Greffière : Tonia Grannum

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#### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Monday 20 January 1997

#### ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

#### COMITÉ PERMANENT DES AFFAIRES SOCIALES

Lundi 20 janvier 1997

The committee met at 1530 in room 151.

#### FUNDING FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Consideration of the designated matter pursuant to standing order 125 relating to the impact of the Conservative government's funding and funding cuts on persons with disabilities and their families.

The Acting Chair (Mr Michael Gravelle): Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the standing committee on social development. Today we're beginning standing order 125, 12 hours of hearings to deliberate the impact of the Conservative government's funding and funding cuts on persons with disabilities and their families.

#### PEOPLE FIRST OF ONTARIO

The Acting Chair: We have about two and a half hours this afternoon and we have our first group, People First of Ontario, sitting before us. Welcome. Thank you very much for coming down from Sudbury; we appreciate it. You will have 30 minutes to make your presentation. Whatever time is left over after your oral presentation will be divided equally between the three parties. If you would begin and introduce yourselves to the committee, we will get started.

Ms Pauline Lynch: Hi, I'm Pauline Lynch. I'm president of People First of Ontario. I'll give a brief history of our organization. Our organization was started in 1981 and it was designed for developmentally handicapped persons who have lived in institutions and then come out of institutions, who have worked in segregated work areas, lived in group homes. They felt they weren't being listened to and didn't have a voice. So People First has some goals we've developed to promote full equality for persons, to assist other people in learning to speak for themselves, to teach others in the community about the rights and strengths of People First members.

We do not run services. We are not professionals. We are people who have been labelled — People First was started by people who were labelled mentally handicapped

**Mr Peter Parks:** People with disabilities are people first. That means everybody is a citizen of Ontario.

The Acting Chair: Excuse me, you're Mr Parks, the past president?

Mr Parks: Yes, I'm Peter Parks, past president. Maybe this is the thing I should have thrown in here. I'm also cofounder of People First of Ontario, so I've been around a few years.

Therefore, if they're citizens, they should enjoy the rights just as everybody else, such as in our education or in our health care, for employment or income support or transportation or marriage. I know, because I'm a labelled person. I had to ask to get married, had to ask somebody else, not my spouse. I had to go and ask a cotton-picking lawyer if it was okay to get married because of some age-old law that says a handicapped person shouldn't get married. It's been repealed since, but that was then.

Also, we're guaranteed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to "equal benefit of the law without discrimination based on mental or physical disability." While most of the people we represent require special assistance in coming to something like this or other just plain meetings and maybe talking to other people, need time to be understood, they're ordinary citizens. We want to be included in the public, not excluded by being forced into segregated settings, as Pauline mentioned, group homes, institutions or different special education where you're taught to put, as I call it, a round peg in a square hole for 18 years or more.

The typical life experience of many people who have been labelled is that they're segregated and excluded from our so-called communities. We ought to feel badly because they are citizens. People — society — think we can't make a decision that's good. I know I don't make decisions in isolation. I talk to other people and find out what would happen "if." People think that we can — I say we don't make them in isolation. We talk about others, but they're trying to force us to make them in isolation.

We oftentimes do not have a choice of what we wear. I happen to be lucky enough to choose to wear these clothes, but oftentimes people haven't got these clothes to wear. They don't even have a white shirt or a tie, things we all take for granted.

People don't listen to us. As a labelled person, your opinion doesn't matter. Go ahead and do it, the other people that is, go ahead and do it anyhow.

The president of the organization I work for stated to the Federal Task Force on Disability Issues: "We are citizens, but most of society does not see or value our citizenship. We are still seen as children who never grow up."

I didn't plan on reading all this, just summarizing. We are worried about these cuts. We are uncertain what we might face. It's been bad enough without these cuts. I used to be proud to say I was an Ontarian. Now I don't know. I don't know what's happening to the Ontario I knew. I know it's eroding.

I'd like to turn it over to Pauline because at the board meeting she had this past weekend there were some issues brought up about the cuts and how they were affecting people, members of society, citizens, members of our movement. These are the everyday life experiences. 1540

Ms Lynch: What do the cuts mean to our members? Some of the issues we talked about were that family benefits have been reduced and rent-geared-to-income housing units have been reduced. There are cuts to organizations and groups that help many of our members who live in the community receive support, cuts to literacy programs.

Example: In one community, there were two teachers to 28 adults. Now there is one teacher to 28 adults. How can people get the help they need? Transportation: reclassifying who can use the handy transit. It sort of limits how people with any type of disability can get around if they can't use the handy transit. The \$2 dispensing fee for drugs has been an issue for our members, because some people take a lot of drugs and the extra \$32\$ they might have to pay per prescription could be very costly for our members.

Having the Employment Equity Act taken away: Many of our members have had jobs and employment equity has helped them to get jobs, and now there's nothing there. They're staying home or going back to work in sheltered workshops.

Our members want to be socially and economically integrated into our communities. However, the majority of people who have been labelled have very little education. When they are looking for work, if they have to fill out an application form and they do not understand it or they cannot read, who will help them?

In local associations for community living there's a supported employment program. The job coaches have been — in one example, there's been one place where three job coaches have been laid off because of funding cuts. That leaves one job coach to run the whole program. There may be 50 people in the program and one job coach left to look after them. Some people end up going back to work in their sheltered workshops.

Our concern is also that the people who have been sort of falling between the cracks are going to fall deeper into the cracks because of lack of funding to support them in whatever way they need.

Mr Parks: We are very concerned the government will attempt to cut the costs of disability service by defining "disability" in a very narrow fashion. I know I need support. Likely, if they define "disability" in such a narrow way, I won't be able to get this accommodation, as it's known. Every person or every citizen with a disability has a particular need, but if disability is defined in a way that excludes those people who can do some things for themselves, but not other things, the government will leave a heck of a lot of people with disabilities at a serious disadvantage.

It has been recognized for years that the institutional model for serving people labelled "mentally handicapped" is a terrible way for people to live their lives. Still, the government spends \$300 million on institutions which house fewer than 3,000 persons, so the average cost is \$115,000 a person. Approximately another 5,000 live in group homes, which we think of as mini-institutions, at

a cost of \$200 million, average cost \$40,000 a person. Programs like special services at home and the recent announcement just scratch the surface of the actual needs of people who wish to live like all other Ontarians, in other words, with families or in homes of their choice, not of somebody else's. I wouldn't want somebody saying I have to live in that building.

The vast majority of the citizens of this province who have a serious enough intellectual disability that they cannot live independently, about 65,000, receive no publicly funded services of any kind, except for some kind of income support under the Family Benefits Act. We know there are very different levels of expenditures that do not correspond to the actual needs of people. For every individual in an institution, you could find another with the same needs in a group home and another living with his or her family with hardly any cost to the government. It is time to move to individualized funding and away from the institutional model.

What is it going to take to make a level playing field for all Ontarians, regardless of their ability? These cuts are chipping away at the things that we need to level the playing field for us. People who are labelled as having mental handicaps are not seen as full citizens. In fact, we aren't even seen as second-class citizens. When you are seen as a person first, then when it comes time to make choices about who will receive the help — we aren't going to get it; that we know. People who are labelled "mentally handicapped" historically have not made — somebody put "the top of the list." When they typed this up, but I say "the bottom of the list." This is a struggle we have been faced with just to live the rest of our lives like citizens of Ontario who have not been labelled.

Since we're citizens of Ontario, why aren't Ontarians with disabilities treated fairly, regardless of where they live in the province or which municipality they live in? This is important if all social services and supports are to be the responsibility of the municipal governments across the province, which we think would hurt people. Standards for providing such services must be set by the Ontario Legislature so that the local governments cannot balance their budgets at the expense of people whose ordinary needs cannot be met in the traditional way.

We need leadership in the form of supports to our communities to accept people, not see them as burdens; we need leadership in legislation to protect those members who are vulnerable and we need support to be able to speak for ourselves.

Ms Lynch: We'd like to end our presentation and open the floor to questions now.

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): Thank you, Mr Parks and Ms Lynch. We appreciate your being here today. Your organization is a member of the minister's advisory council. Is that correct?

Ms Lvnch: Yes, I sit on that committee.

Mr Carroll: How long ago did that committee start to function?

Ms Lynch: It was about a year and a half ago when David Tsubouchi was minister.

Mr Carroll: So it's something that Mr Tsubouchi started?

Ms Lynch: Yes.

Mr Carroll: Have you found that beneficial?

**Ms Lynch:** Yes. It was beneficial in the fact that just to be on the committee with the rest of the committee being service providers and me being a self-advocate, it meant a lot because a lot of the things we said were agreed upon by service providers.

**Mr Carroll:** So you get a sense from being on that committee that in fact we are interested in improving the services that are being offered to people with disabilities? Do you get that sense from being on that committee? Are we interested at least in hearing what you have to say?

Ms Lynch: Yes.

Mr Carroll: You talk about several issues that are potential areas of problems and I understand that. I'd like to assure you that, from a standpoint of our commitment to service levels being legislated at the provincial level, the standards would be set provincially. Regardless of how the funding model changes, we are committed to the standards being set by the province because we believe

very strongly in that.

The whole exercise that we're going through is to make sure that there are more dollars. We have a limited amount of money available. The taxpayers of Ontario have a limited amount of money to spend on any program, regardless of what it is. There are people in our community who very much need our support and will continue to need our support. Unfortunately, over the years we've developed a series of systems that have become too expensive. We're spending too much money on the system and there isn't enough money left over to adequately help the people we are trying to serve.

What we're trying to do now is to change it around so that within that amount of money we have to spend we can have a higher percentage of that available to spend on people who need the funding rather than spend it on the bureaucracy and the organization. Does it make sense that we would take that kind of an approach? Mr Parks,

do you see any -

Mr Parks: No, it doesn't make sense to me, because there's a quality-of-life issue here. Everybody has a different need, and to me that way is measuring it as if everybody has one need only. I am sorry, but everybody has got different needs. Right up front, I've got different needs than you have.

**Mr Carroll:** So you advocate funding the needs of the person rather than an organization?

Mr Parks: That's right.

Mr Carroll: I don't disagree with that. I think that's a good point. But do you think there's some change

required to get to that kind of a model?

Mr Parks: Right now, the way I see it, they're taking the money away. The government is taking the money away and they aren't funding the needs of the person. They're just saying, "Well, if Joe Blow only needs suchand-such to survive, that's what Mary Ann needs to survive." In reality, it's not that way.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I want to thank you as well for making a presentation to the committee today. You are truly a remarkable organization. Nobody can be better advocates for the needs of people than those who are dealing with the day-to-day reality of it, so thank you for coming.

I know all of us value your opinions. It concerns me that one of the things you say in your brief is that you're in danger of not being able to continue to advocate because of the lack of funding for the organization, and I hope the government members will take note of that. Unless we can hear from you on a regular basis, simply asking you to sit on a committee won't be meaningful because you won't exist as an organization, and making sure you continue to exist is critical.

When we had proposed having committee hearings into the effect of the government cuts on the disabled it was of course before last week and some of the changes. I think our concerns perhaps now are even greater than they were a week ago. Considering that there were not supposed to have been any cuts made to the disabled, you've already outlined a number of areas in which members of your organization have been experiencing problems.

I know, with three minutes left, we don't have time to highlight them all, but one that really stood out for me was the fact that already rent-geared-to-income units have been reduced so that members of your organization are finding they have difficulty getting housing. I guess one of the questions I would have — and we have so little time — is, what happens as 100% of the costs for social housing has been transferred to the municipalities? If the units are already being reduced, if housing is already a problem, is that going to be an even greater problem?

I guess I have the same concern about transportation. You are already seeing cuts to transportation support. Now that the municipalities have to cope with all of this as a new service, who is going to be out there to help ensure that the disabled in our communities actually get the support they need? We have little time, but you might want to comment on whether those are a couple of the areas in which you see some real problems ahead.

Ms Lynch: I do. Most of our members are still in group homes and moving from a group home to the community is really hard to do when you're on a fixed income. As it is, it's hard enough to just make ends meet. The housing issue could be detrimental because they may eventually move out into the community and maybe end up being on the street one day because they can't afford to pay the rent because the rent increase is going up all the time.

People won't be able to keep jobs because they won't be able to get to and from work, or they just won't be able to function as well going into the community to shop or to do daily doctors' appointments. It won't be as accommodating.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate that.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): We also want to thank you for being here today. I want to follow up actually on Mr Carroll's questions to you. I thought it was kind of like — you know in courtrooms how they say that sometimes attorneys ask leading questions? I thought it was kind of leading to say: "But aren't you on a committee?" and "Where did the committee start?" and "Doesn't that mean you're being listened to?"

I want to put to you a counterproposition. It seems to me that there are lots of forums for councils and committees that members from your community have been on over the years with all governments. This government actually cancelled the advisory council on disability issues and then created another structure, right? Isn't the true test of whether you feel you're being listened to whether you're heard, whether your recommendations are actually acted on? Do you feel that you're being heard by this government?

Ms Lynch: Not yet. I haven't really seen anything that this government has done for anything as being positive. The announcement last week I found very hard to follow. There was no structure to it. It's just: "We're shifting this

to the municipalities. That's it."

Ms Lankin: We're all having that trouble.

**Ms Lynch:** But I'm just saying, it's things like that. They said they haven't really looked at disabled issues yet, so I'm afraid that same sort of thing is going to happen to the disabled.

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Ms Lankin: In fact, the government made a commitment that they wouldn't cut services to the disabled at all, yet I see certain things in the budget like — there was an access fund to renovate public buildings. It had been \$3 million under the previous government's budget and they cut that altogether and then they reannounced it as a brand-new initiative of \$1.5 million. Isn't that, in effect, a cut to your services?

Ms Lvnch: Yes.

Ms Lankin: Another example is the special services at home program, which was cut by something like 25% and then reannounced by Ms Ecker this past week as five million new dollars. When you actually compare it, isn't that a cut?

Ms Lynch: Exactly.

Ms Lankin: At this point, do you believe the government hasn't cut services?

Ms Lynch: I think they have. They're hidden cuts, where you have to really look at it. They may not really show it as a cut, but the wording may be, like you said,

a cut type of thing.

The Chair (Mr Richard Patten): I'm going to have to say thank you. The time has gone over. I'd like to thank you, Ms Lynch and Mr Parks, for your presentation today and for taking the time to prepare your brief and be with us.

#### VERONICA MANUEL

The Chair: Is Veronica Manuel present? You have half an hour for your presentation and/or questions. Whatever time remains from your presentation we divide between the three parties for comments or questions with you. Welcome, and thank you very much for being here with us.

Ms Veronica Manuel: Thank you for having me. I wrote out my presentation because I was aware there was a time limit, and I didn't want to go over and not leave time for questions.

My name is Veronica Manuel, and I am the parent of a severely disabled five-year-old child. Dylan has cerebral palsy, is blind and has a severe seizure disorder. He also has a disorder called silent aspiration and therefore cannot eat orally. His only source of nutrition is given to him eight times daily through a gastrostomy tube inserted into his stomach. This alone takes seven to eight hours of the day. On top of that, Dylan needs Ventolin and Intal inhalations a minimum of two to four times a day, chest physio twice a day and occasional suctioning for pharyngeal pooling.

Dylan is virtually dependent for all aspects of daily living. He is unable to walk, talk, sit, roll over or hold up his own head without support. He has trouble moving his bowels and requires Fleet enemas every second day. His daily medications, and this does not include any medications which are needed for acute illness, include Vigabitran, Mogadon, Cisapride, Clobazam, Phenobarb, Ranitidine, Carnitine, Ventolin and Intal. These are adminis-

tered four times a day through his g-tube.

Dylan is described by professionals in terms such as "severe developmental delay," "totally dependent," "permanently brain damaged" and "medically fragile." His life expectancy has been estimated at between six and 14 years of age, but I am told this depends greatly on his quality of care and the prevention of further complications. I am told he functions at a three-to-four-month-old level and there is little hope for any further progress. Despite all of this, keeping Dylan at home with his family is something I am totally committed to but also something that keeps me somewhat dependent on the system.

In 1993, a Wesway host family was found. They took Dylan for one afternoon, and they never had him back again. In 1994, after three years of basically caring for Dylan on my own and nearly collapsing with exhaustion, Dylan was put on a complex care program, which provides support services for 71 hours of the week. The remaining 96 hours of the week I am solely responsible for, plus many times I must cover shifts for workers who cannot make it to work or who arrive late. The cuts and policies implemented by the Conservative government have negatively impacted me and my family in many ways. Simply to avoid repetitive writing, I would like to read you a letter I previously wrote to Premier Mike

"Dear Mr Harris,

"The Conservative government's goal of misleading the public into believing that welfare recipients need a taste of hardship to become motivated is evident in your mandate of cutting benefits, introducing fraud lines and creating and enforcing irrational eligibility criteria. Your next claim to fame is to implement workfare and with the help of the Royal Bank to start fingerprinting recipients as though we were criminals.

"It is demeaning to me and my son, being truly in need of emotional, physical, and financial support to, by failed recognition, be forced into extreme poverty and hardship under a system whose policies and criteria are supposedly created for people who are unable or, as the Conservatives imply, unwilling to work. Besides meeting Dylan's medical needs, I must coordinate service providers and make schedules. I must order all his medications, feeding tubes, bags, decompression tubes, suction tubes, Ventolin

masks, liquid nutrition and enemas. To prevent contractures and skin ulcers I must get up twice a night to reposition and turn him. When his breathing is really laboured, I must stay up with him all night to monitor him and give Ventolin treatments or suction him. I must make and accompany him to numerous appointments with specialists such as pediatricians, neurologists, speech therapists, dieticians, orthopaedic surgeons, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and equipment specialists. I also work on a casual basis, care for myself and two other children (one of whom is Dylan's twin) and maintain the home. Do I appear jobless? Do I fit your portrayal of a welfare recipient?

"These cuts, new policies and inaccurate portrayals have hurt my family and me financially, emotionally, physically and socially. I feel as though I am being killed for ensuring my son survives. With the pending closure of more institutions and a lack of forward planning, my

story shall become common.

"How can you recognize my need of handicapped children's benefits, which is based on income, and then implement a 21% cut to my family benefits? You are robbing Peter to pay Paul. The reduction to benefits has made it virtually impossible for me to make ends meet and I have literally resorted to drinking Dylan's liquid nutrition some days to avoid running out of groceries. Sadly, I consider myself lucky to have this option as otherwise I would line up at food banks. In the midst of these cuts your government is closing local offices whose job is to track down delinquent parents and enforce support. Go figure! Hopefully the savings from these cuts will accommodate the wealth of caregivers who will now not collect any child support.

"One of your government's new eligibility criteria is such that as long as I have to be part of the welfare system, I may not co-reside with another person or am at risk for termination. Pardon me, I should rephrase 'another person' to 'a male person.' This criteria would not have applied if I were living with another female in

a gay relationship!

"Incredibly, my fate was put in the hands of a single person who assessed a spousal form and determined that my co-resident and I were 'spouses' (justifiably, even a

criminal gets the benefit of a jury)."

I would like to say I brought that spousal form with me, the original one I filled out. There was not one question on here that asked, "Are there any circumstances which warrant another person in your home?" It asked, "How do you introduce your co-resident?" To this, I said, "By his name." It asked if we had any joint bank accounts, joint credit cards, any of that. We had none of that. I still to this day do not know what this was based on. It asked, "Did he spend time with your children? Did he help out with them?" Yes, he did. But the mentality of that is, if I had a different man in and out of my house every night who had nothing to do with my kids, the system would say: "That's okay, that's fine. Because you have somebody who is helping with the kids and doing stuff, we're not going to help you."

"Mr Harris, this is a great example of the lengths your government will go to even at the expense of my son, to imply to the public that you are looking out for their better interest. At first glance it would appear to people that you are taking a stand in the 'subsidizing of bordellos,' a quotation of the famous Evelyn Dodds. In reality, this enforced policy not only created hardship for my family but cost the taxpayer even more. My benefits, which decreased when he moved in, increased when he moved out! My previously subsidized rent, which was no longer subsidized when he moved in, is now being subsidized again! Where is the saving? Where is the rationale? The fact that this man's inability to support us financially was compensated for in many other ways was totally overlooked."

I'd like to say there that he did for free what no other person in Dylan's life did unless they were paid professionals. He learned to tube-feed Dylan. He took care of the kids in the night if Dylan had to go to the hospital. Dylan has been admitted to hospital 40 times in five years, and 80% of those admissions have been in the night-time hours. He was the one free support in my life,

in Dylan's life, and he was booted out.

"The irony here is that I, the parent, who stays to care for my son, am forced to remain on my own while the other parent leaves, marries, pays minimal support and carries on with his life. Why does the system not track down the absent parent, deny them a partner, accuse them of robbing the system, fingerprint them and insist, if they have a 'spouse,' that the spouse also provide financial support to their children, just as your policies suggest that my co-resident should? The answer to this is simple. The system is backwards, as the advantage is given to the parent who deserts their child."

I went to legal aid to apply to get a lawyer to take Dylan's father to court for child support. I told them about Dylan and everything. I got the application back on November 1, 1996, saying, "You've been denied this as this is not a priority case." I brought that with me too if you'd like to see it.

"As a birth mother and caregiver, I ask you, would it be conceivable for a foster mother, while caring for her foster child, to be terminated from the system or accused of fraud, simply for establishing a relationship? Positively not, because although we do the same job she is in a

system that recognizes her.

"I am enclosing a document which clearly shows that as a foster mother, not only is she recognized, but adequately (for lack of a better word) compensated. In comparison, this document also shows how much I must struggle to get by on. Why, not only the great disadvantage to my children but the insult to my efforts? Is this incentive to keep my family together? So you cannot mistakenly assume or imply that my figures are inaccurate or exaggerated, I have had it witnessed by Rob Richardson, executive director of CAS, Thunder Bay, and Teena Finley, City of Thunder Bay Social Services."

If you look on the next page, it shows what I get from family benefits, \$420.47 per month, and child support of \$550 a month, for a total income of \$970.47. I get handicapped children's benefits — I didn't put that on there because that goes towards stuff for Dylan — and that's the maximum you can receive. My expenses for Dylan are way in excess of \$500 a month. A foster

mother with three children, one of whom is handicapped as Dylan is, would receive \$4,026.50 per month. Above and beyond that, they would pay every medical expense of Dylan's: drugs, tubing, diapers, whatever. They would provide respite to the family. Just a thought.

"I, by doing my job of caring for Dylan at home, am enabling you to do your job of closing institutions. Instead of reinvesting the money saved to assist me in my effort, you impose hardship, isolation and poverty on me. Then, when despite being on welfare, I have actually saved the taxpayer hundreds of thousands of dollars, you portray me as a criminal, thief, abuser of the system and a person in need of hardship. I have been living hardship!

"The new fraud lines are set up so that any person may call and allege a recipient is committing fraud. I ask you, why a fraud line exclusively for welfare recipients? Why not also combat UI fraud, compensation fraud, tax fraud etc? I guess the safe assumption is that a person more likely to steal is a starving person, and who better than a 'welfare thief' to add credibility to the predisposed notion that recipients are responsible for the demise of the economy.

"Giving your government a previous benefit of a doubt and believing a quote that 'children are a priority of our government' (Thunder Bay Post, June 4, 1996, issue), I have twice written to Mr David Tsubouchi" - this was before the cabinet shuffle; I have since written to Ms Janet Ecker — "informing him of my circumstances, efforts and the hardship created by your government's attitudes and policies. His response to me was a brief acknowledgment of having received my one letter. My second letter has yet to be acknowledged. His neglect in dealing with these issues brings truth to Albert Einstein's statement that 'The problems of the present day cannot be solved at the level of thinking that created them.' Mr. Tsubouchi cannot now allege that the consequences of these policies eluded him but rather that he chooses to ignore them.

"He showed no desire to acknowledge or deal with the fact that the hardship these policies are creating causes frightening uncertainty about Dylan's future. If the hardship forces me to work full-time outside my home, it shall also force Dylan out of his home. Even in two-parent families, one is usually forced to abandon a paying profession for the uncompensated one of caregiving. This greatly decreases the family's income at a time when expenses become extraordinary. In one-parent families such as mine, Mr Tsubouchi claims his intentions are to give me a 'hand up,' when in fact he is giving Dylan a 'hand out,' — right out of his home.

"He showed no desire to acknowledge or deal with the fact that while baby-boomers are aging and modern medicine is keeping more and more children like Dylan alive, institutions are closing! Does he not realize that as more and more of the population become family caregivers, the lack of forward planning can only facilitate crisis? Modern medicine, considered a saving grace for many, becomes irrelevant without a commitment and the proper resources to support people and their families in the prolonged period. The scenario is the same as rescuing a young deer from a trap only to throw it in a pen with wolves. Is not the caregiver...who is now expected

to rescue, protect and care for the deer, also at risk? A highly exaggerated comparison, you may think. Not by my experiences! I have been to doctors for fatigue, stress and burnout. Their only solution, because their hands are also tied, is to offer me medication which supposedly will temporarily help me to cope. I do not need medication! I need financial, emotional, physical and social support."

I would just like to comment on the mentality of that kind of solution. We as a society say: "Sorry, we can't help you. There's just no money. We can't do this, we can't do that. All we can do is offer you drugs." Prozac, I think, is the drug of choice these days, if I'm not mistaken. Then we plaster "Say No to Drugs" posters all over and expect our young people to take us seriously.

"The truth is, as Dylan's mother and primary caregiver, I am struggling. Daily, I fear for his future life, only to be confronted by an even greater fear of the alternative, his future death. Over the past five years, I have exhausted my financial resources, I have exhausted my family and friends and I am exhausting myself. A continued lack of support will mean that I am soon to be forced to raise my hands and surrender...but Dylan shall not go quietly. I will not be patronized by a system that says, 'You did the best you could,' and then turns around and makes it easier for someone else! He may be dependent, he may be brain-damaged, he may be delayed and he may be fragile, but he is mine, and his life will not be in vain. Dylan's blissful ignorance of our circumstances is apparent, but I can guarantee you that he would not be blissfully ignorant if he were removed from his home. He would die.

"When I hear similar expressions of desperation from other caregivers, or worse yet, when I think about the fate of Tracy Latimer, I realize my struggle is not unique or due to incompetence. Caregiving for Dylan is challenging but more challenging is my financial struggle. More challenging is my social isolation because my schedule is filled to capacity with the demands of caregiving. More challenging is the constant stress endured by my other family members. More challenging is my constant fight for much-needed support and recognition..." but most "challenging is the fact that I do not wish to quit but cannot continue because the system insists that I do not have a job!

"Mr Harris, caregiving is a job! It is a stressful, timeconsuming, demanding, draining, financially straining and never-ending job and nothing will change the fact that my son requires a...caregiver."

Just in closing I would like to say, ladies and gentlemen, that despite my competency, despite my love for my child and my desire to keep him at home, the cuts and policies of the Conservative government have set up the system so I will fail.

Children are not a priority of this government. The disabled are not a priority of this government. If they were a priority, there would have been no need for me to have travelled 1,000 miles to be here today. Rather, they would have responded with solutions to the many letters I have written them over the past year, including to Mr Harris, Mr Tsubouchi, Janet Ecker, and also a meeting with Cameron MacKinnon from Ms Ecker's office. I can show you the stack of letters I have written.

If any of you believe that children must be a priority, then it is my hope that you will not simply sit up and take notice, but instead challenge yourselves to get up and take action. Tell the Harris government to stop the cuts to disabled children and their families. Tell them that Dylan Manuel and his family are living proof that their cuts and policies will inevitably force very much loved children from their homes. Tell them that I have a job and that it is a job that deserves recognition and rational policies to support my efforts, not hinder them. If you do not, then you have simply condoned my failure with your silence.

1620

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): Thank you very much, Veronica. It's really incredible just to listen to it. Certainly you and I know each other well from our times talking about the situation in Thunder Bay, and I'm very glad you have had the opportunity to come here so that all members, particularly the government members, can hear your story.

I know that you met recently with an assistant to Minister Ecker, a couple of months ago. Can you tell me what response you've received from that meeting?

**Ms Manuel:** I have received no response. I haven't received a letter, an acknowledgement. I met with him here in Toronto. I had probably a good half-hour meeting with him.

I know you wrote a letter to them. I have written to Janet Ecker. In fact, not only did I write to her, I phoned her Pickering office and spoke to Marilyn and I spoke to Susan and said, "You know, I've had no response to this letter that I wrote to her." It was written in August last year. To date I have had no response, none.

Mr Gravelle: The letter you read to us, to the Premier,

what response did you get to that?

Ms Manuel: I wrote that letter to Premier Mike Harris on July 12, 1996. I received a response from him in August saying he had sent my letter to Janet Ecker, because that was her jurisdiction, I guess.

Mr Gravelle: And you didn't get a response to that?

Ms Manuel: I still have not got a response.

Mr Gravelle: Veronica, this may not be a fair question. I think it's important to point out that you are an incredible champion for Dylan. I've met Dylan as well. He's really a lovely boy, and obviously you're a wonderful mother to him. I think what you're trying to say here today is important for people to hear, but unless things change, do you have a sense of just how much longer you can go on with this? I hope that question doesn't upset you. I know how difficult it is for you.

Ms Manuel: Michael, I have indebted myself terribly over the last few years. I'm in debt over my head, and that to me is like — I don't care. I have a job to do and I have to do it, but it's getting to the point where sure, I was indebting myself but I was eating and my kids were eating. I was taking care of Dylan. Gerald was helping. It was working. It wasn't the greatest solution. It wasn't the greatest scenario. It was one I don't think anybody here would trade places with me for, but it was working.

With the cuts, I mean, \$2 for a prescription sounds minimal. That sounds fair. If you have a child like Dylan, it's astronomical. I brought drug receipts with me. From January 1 to yesterday I have spent about \$130 and the month isn't over yet. It's just one thing after another.

The free support I had, without rhyme or reason, out. Is this a morals thing? Where is the rationale to it? Those are the answers I want to my questions. Who made this spousal form and what was it based on? It was given to me. I had to cooperate, I had to fill it out or I would have been cut off, but nobody wants to take credit for it. Nobody wants to say, "I'm the one who decided this and this is why."

I think it's only fair when they impose that on you and give you 10 days' notice and say, "Get him out or you're cut off," that they at least respond to you, and I said, "If you get me 10 days' notice, then perhaps you should respond in 10 days," but that hasn't happened. It's been

months and I've never had a response.

Ms Lankin: I'm just tremendously moved by your being here today and sharing with this committee the difficulties you're struggling with on a day-to-day basis.

I know, having spent some time in and around the Ministry of Health and in cabinet in the past, that part of this has been an ongoing dilemma for governments, that being the balance towards providing support to those parents who are parenting in their homes and the amazing contrast of that to institutional supports. It's been an ongoing struggle for governments to try and come to terms with that.

I'm struck by the case you make about these further cuts and what it means to your ability to even do that. We know the end result is that if you give up and Dylan is moved into an institution, as you said, the biggest cost of that is, can you be assured he's going to get the level of care you're providing and that he's going to survive? But on a day-to-day basis, as his first move in there the costs are going to be so much more than what they are now. So there's no rhyme or reason to that.

I just want to try and understand a little bit more. I want you to take the time to tell the government members a little bit more about what the cut in family benefits has meant to you in terms of trying to make ends meet.

Ms Manuel: I don't make ends meet.

**Ms Lankin:** The other issue is the co-resident, the expectation that there should be a financial commitment. Did you challenge them with that, the fact that support

for your caregiving is different from finances.

Ms Manuel: I challenged that with them. I mean, this man's inability to support us financially was compensated for in many other ways. He was not on benefits of any sort, had worked at a job for 10 years, is still working, was from a divorced family and pays \$1,000 a month in child support to his own children, and I say: "Rightly so. Those are your children. Those are your responsibilities and you should pay them." He maintains them on his drug, dental, all that kind of stuff.

I don't see, when Dylan's own father — I applied to try and get money from him and I was told, "This is not a priority but we expect this other man to pay." He does for Dylan for free what nobody does. He's the only person in Dylan's life who doesn't get paid. He doesn't get invited to friends' birthday parties. The neighbourhood kids don't come and call on him. My friends don't say, "Let us have Dylan for the afternoon." It's too

complex. For Dylan to go somewhere the whole hospital has to go with him, our home hospital is what I'm saying. What was the other question?

Ms Lankin: The cut in benefit levels, what it's meant

to your finances.

Ms Manuel: I don't make ends meet, I don't, and I probably won't ever again. I work. That's the thing. I work on a casual basis, and what dictates when I can work is: (1) When they need me, do I have somebody to care for Dylan; (2) did that person come to work on time, did they call in sick or are they scheduled; and (3) was I up all night with Dylan?

Many nights Dylan needs suctioning throughout the night. He needs Ventolin. I'm up twice a night to turn him and position him. His last feed doesn't finish until 11 O'clock at night. He requires 24-hour care. Tuesdays and Thursdays he goes to school during the day to an MD class, so I don't have help those days; the school has the help. But if he's sick and at home I can't transfer the help from the school back into my home. That's theirs; this is mine. So Tuesdays and Thursdays if he doesn't go because he's ill or whatever is happening, I keep him home and I have to stay home with him, that's just part of the thing, and he's missed.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): Veronica, I echo the comments of my colleagues on the other side that I was moved by your presentation. In other settings, I understand what you're dealing with and I have consummate concern for what you're dealing with at this point. In some ways I think that is the reason why one of the ministers and certainly the government have moved towards the initiative for vulnerable adults to improve, in fact double, money that's currently in a refocused community action fund and begin to bring some focus to volunteers and families.

Hopefully some of that will begin to address part of the issue you're wrestling with, but I'd like to go to a part of your deputation I'd like you to educate me a bit on, in terms of budget, which I think requires considerable attention. Can you tell me, if I were to ask you to go back two years, how would the budget differ at that point?

Ms Manuel: My budget or the budget that's carrying Dylan?

Mr Shea: Yes, the budget — you showed a good comparison.

Ms Manuel: My benefits decreased by 21%. In light of taking money away from me, they added extra costs to me. Dylan's drugs, most of them I got for free with a drug card; some of them I had to pay for because they weren't covered. I now have to pay \$2 per prescription. In light of taking some money away, saying, "We're going to cut 21%," I thought: "That's okay. Why don't you pay for these drugs, though, the ones that aren't covered?" Now I pay \$2 for every prescription; plus the Carnitine that Dylan's on is not covered by anybody. That costs me about \$100 a month because he's on it three times a day and the pills are about \$1.50 per pill.

Mr Shea: To your knowledge, are there drugs covered now that were not covered say several years ago that would apply in your particular instance?

Ms Manuel: That weren't? The one that Dylan was on was called Vigabitran and it wasn't covered. It was a new drug in Canada and it was under testing, and that cost about \$50 per month.

Mr Shea: It's covered now?

Ms Manuel: It just got covered; I paid for it for two years.

Mr Shea: I don't want to prolong this. I'm concerned about it, but I know my colleague would like to pursue a question as well, so I'll ask Mr Carroll.

Mr Carroll: As you stated, it's a very complex issue. There are no easy answers. I'm relatively new into this whole area and the time lines about your not getting an answer to your letter I don't think are acceptable and I will take it upon myself to see that you get an answer.

Ms Manuel: I can give you copies of my letters.

**Mr Carroll:** I'm not going to take it upon myself to guarantee you an answer you're going to like, but I will ensure you at least get an answer.

Ms Manuel: I have a whole stack of them.

**Mr Carroll:** What one specific decision could be made by this government that would make your particular situation more tenable?

Ms Manuel: I'm glad you asked me that. I believe that caregivers should be given recognized employed status. I believe I'm going to have to depend on the system to a certain degree as long as I care for Dylan, so why not make it so that I can keep him at home and care for him while doing that? That's the cheapest way to care for Dylan.

I'm proud to say that in five years that child has never had a skin breakdown. He has never had contractures. We exercise him, we turn him, we flip him, we rub him. He is healthy — as healthy as he can be — in the sense that we are preventing further complications for him. He is a happy child. He smiles, he laughs, despite everything.

You need to recognize that caregivers have a job. I am not without a job. If I put Dylan into an institution and went and did for another child what I do for him, you would say, "You have a job," but because I do it for my own son, I don't have a job. I'm on welfare and along with being on welfare come your irrational policies that are intended for people who don't have a job. That's trying to motivate people. The only way you're going to motivate me off the system is to make it so hard for me, which you're doing, that I have to make a decision: Can I feed my healthy kids and myself or should I let Dylan go? That's what it's coming to. I can't do both.

**The Chair:** Ms Manuel, our time is up. On behalf of the committee, thank you for coming all this way.

Ms Manuel: Thank you for having me.

**The Chair:** As you can see, you've had some impact on the committee.

Is the Ontario Association for Community Living here? They were to appear at 5. We have some time and the subcommittee needs to deliberate about some travel. If I could suggest that we reconvene at five to 5, that would give us 20-odd minutes to have a break and phone in and see what messages you have in your offices. We'll recess until five to 5.

The committee recessed from 1634 to 1656.

### ONTARIO ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY LIVING

The Chair: If I could welcome the Ontario Association for Community Living, we'll resume the committee hearings. Thank you for joining us this afternoon. I would ask that you introduce yourselves for the purpose of Hansard placing you on the record as to who is providing

testimony. You may proceed.

Mr Bill Nicholls: Mr Chair, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for allowing us to be here. I would introduce our group. Agnes Samler is the executive director of the Metropolitan Toronto Association for Community Living. Jim Turner is a board member of the Ontario association, a member of the Metropolitan Toronto association, and he has a young son — a young gentleman, I should say — who receives support from the Metropolitan Toronto association. Rod Walsh is the executive director of the Ontario Association for Community Living. I'm Bill Nicholls. I'm on the Ontario association board as well and a member of the Peterborough Association for Community Living. I believe you have a copy of our presentation, and we shall go through it.

The Ontario Association for Community Living, OACL, was formed over 40 years ago by parents and others who were fighting for the right of their sons, daughters and friends to attend school. Some of you may remember us as the Ontario Association for the Mentally Retarded some 10 or 12 years ago, before we changed our name. Today our membership exceeds 12,000 people within a federation of more than 100 local associations. We work to support children as well as adults who have an intellectual disability. OACL and its provincial and territorial counterparts together form the Canadian Association for Community Living, CACL, which is part

of a worldwide advocacy network.

The impact of constraints: The committee will hear from many presenters about the incredible hardship being caused to people with disabilities as a result of government cuts to disability services and supports. OACL agrees that these cuts have had a severe negative effect on people with disabilities. We too will highlight a number of examples of the serious impact cuts to disability services have had on individuals and families in this province. We believe, however, that a review of the impact on cuts to people with disabilities must take a broader view than simply the impact resulting from cuts to specialized disability services. The government must ensure that the entire network of supports and services provided to all citizens is capable of including and supporting people with disabilities, and you will find that this our theme as we present this to you.

The Association for Community Living, as our name implies, believes that people with disabilities have the right to participate fully in all aspects of community life. The stated goal of our association is: That all persons live in a state of dignity, share in all elements of living in the community and have the opportunity to participate

effectively.

In order to achieve this, we must do more than ensure that specialized services for people with disabilities are in place. We must ensure that public institutions and activities are able to accommodate the needs of all citizens, including people with disabilities.

The current government has expressed repeatedly its commitment to people with disabilities and a desire to protect the specialized services that people with disabilities require. In defending its record, the government will say that services for people with disabilities have been cut less than other funded programs and will point to the insertions of money such as the recent announcement of \$15 million to developmental services funding.

OACL does not wish to question the government's commitment to people with disabilities; there is no doubt a sincere desire by all members of the government to support people with disabilities. We believe, however, that the government misunderstands and seriously underestimates the complex and fragile social structure that must exist to ensure that people with disabilities are able to participate effectively in all aspects of community life.

People with disabilities want to live their lives in the presence of other citizens. This means that when entering the school system, children are welcomed into a regular class in their neighbourhood school; when seeking medical attention, people are able to go to their local doctor's office or hospital emergency room; when seeking recreation and exercise, people are able to attend their local recreation facilities.

While specialized services and programs for people with disabilities are an essential resource for helping people participate in society, they are only a tool. People with disabilities want to live their lives and participate in society in the same way as other citizens. This means that mainstream services must have the capacity to respond to people with disabilities.

The government must recognize that cuts to education, health, recreation, transportation and so on affect people with disabilities in profound ways. In many cases, cuts to these mainstream services have a more severe impact on people with disabilities than on other citizens. When forced to cut budgets, administrators must make decisions to maintain services that meet the needs of the greatest number of people. People with disabilities, being a minority, are often first to lose the supports and services they need to be included in mainstream activities.

We do not expect to convince the government to reverse its agenda for constraint. We hope, however, that the government will come to understand that meeting its commitment to people with disabilities means more than simply protecting funding for disability services. To ensure that people with disabilities continue to receive the supports they need to take their place in society, all public facilities must make special efforts to ensure that they can accommodate the needs of people with disabilities.

School systems faced with constraint must not allow specialized resources for people with disabilities to be eroded. Hospitals must ensure adequate nursing staff to provide the specialized front-line care and support that people with disabilities need. Transportation systems must ensure that people with disabilities, who often have extremely limited options for transportation, receive the services they need.

We believe that the provincial government has a crucial role to play in ensuring that public services

maintain a commitment to people with disabilities. The government should, as part of its cost-cutting exercise, establish standards of service that must be developed and maintained for people with disabilities. This would ensure that the network of services provided for citizens does not contribute to the handicap of people with disabilities.

A window of opportunity: We believe that the government has an unprecedented opportunity for developing such standards. The announcements made last week regarding the realignment of provincial and municipal responsibilities as part of the Who Does What exercise are going to require a significant redrafting of many provincial acts, policies and regulations. The government has committed to providing clear provincial standards for many services which will now be delivered by municipalities, such as child care, long-term care, ambulance services, public health and public housing.

In redrafting or developing provincial standards, the government could ensure a significant measure of protection for people with disabilities against the negative impact of social funding cuts. Newly established standards must include expectations for inclusion of people with disabilities and the necessary accommodations for

individuals' needs.

Protection of individual rights: OACL continues to have grave concerns about the effects of recent changes to the Substitute Decisions Act and the Health Care Consent Act by repeal of the Advocacy Act. In 1996, the government removed most of the safeguards from these two acts. Staff reductions in the public service will eventually affect the current capacity at the public guardian and trustee's office.

Removal of advocacy and rights advice has the greatest detrimental effect on the very people who are most in need of it. It is a fact that people who would never have come under guardianship under previous legislation are now being declared incapable. The absence of advocacy and rights advice has to be a factor. The effect of cost-cutting on the PGT's office is significant and scary. The level of cuts that have occurred can only be addressed by reduced safeguards, since safeguarding policies cost significant amounts of money and take considerable staff time to carry out.

Regulations have now limited capacity assessors to members of certain professions. This means that the scope and intensity of training courses by the capacity assessment office have been reduced, possibly on the assumption that these disciplines have the necessary skills to know how to assess capacity. Although much of the protocol developed initially remains in place, it could be

in jeopardy if there are further cuts.

The effect of the removal of independent advocacy and rights advice from the Substitute Decisions Act and Health Care Consent Act has been to put the onus on the individual to know his or her rights; for example, that he or she can refuse to undergo a capacity assessment, oppose an application for summary disposition or force the application to be dealt with in a hearing where the court would be bound by the prohibition in section 22 and section 55 of the acts. The absence of independent advocacy and rights advice means this is unlikely to happen. In fact, all but a handful of capacity assessments

of people with intellectual disabilities since the SDA has been in force have resulted in guardianship. Further, most of these have been by summary disposition where the judge does not have to hold a hearing or have anyone appearing before him or her, since only paper evidence is required.

In order to cut the cost of monitoring by the PGT's office, the government removed the obligation on guardians to file annual reports. The effect of this has been to diminish safeguards against inappropriate activities by

guardians.

To further cut costs, the government has removed the obligation to ensure that temporary guardianship was a last resort. The result has been that the PGT now has no requirement to take any steps other than those that are necessary for determining whether an application should be made for temporary guardianship. No effort needs to be made to find less drastic alternative solutions for the individual.

Mr Jim Turner: At the community level, while safeguards for people with disabilities continue to be eroded and while doors to mainstream community resources continue to be closed, specialized community services struggle to support people to maintain a reasonable

quality of life.

The pressures on these community services are often incredible. The government points out with some degree of pride that services for people with disabilities have been cut less than other funded programs, and that's probably true. However, this doesn't recognize that these services work within the framework of the community as a whole. As other community resources are reduced or eliminated, disability services are expected to step in and provide alternative resources. As community resources shrink, the demand on disability services grows proportionally. Given this growing demand, the pain of any further reduction for disability services is felt most profoundly.

I'm going to mention later on the Wheel-Trans situation, but this is an example of what happens. The government cut TTC. TTC met its budget by cutting Wheel-Trans. This took a large number of people out of our programs. It took away their ability to have transportation and put incredible pressure on our organization to try to provide for some of the services. So it's this kind

of spinoff effect that we're worried about.

1710

One of the major pressures on community services over the coming years will result from the government's commitment to return 978 people to communities from institutions. OACL applauds the government for this initiative and greets the challenge enthusiastically. This has been the stated policy of our association for about 10 years, and finally it looks like it's going to happen. However, the resources from the institutions that could have been directed to community support have shrunk considerably over the past year.

On page 5 of your copy of this paper there is a series of numbers. I won't get into all the numbers now because it does get a bit complex, but the numbers are there. The end result is that there is significantly less money per individual than was originally planned for and we had

hoped for and is realistic. This is going to make it very, very difficult for organizations to do a proper job of repatriating these people back into our communities.

The challenge facing community services which are attempting to design supports is being further compounded by poor implementation practices. In York region, we were told, York region services have been given profiles on 20 individuals, 11 of whom are currently in institutions and nine of whom are currently living in the community. Services are being asked to propose service plans for the 20 individuals using only the resources which have been allocated for the 11. This reduces the average funding available to each person to \$30,300, or \$48,500 less than the average cost that was originally put up as being the numbers available.

To highlight some of the day-to-day pressures on community support services, we want to look at two of our local associations. The Brantford and District Association for Community Living is an average-sized organization that currently has a significant demand for services that the association is unable to meet, BDACL has a waiting list of 104 individuals. These are all referrals from the community and many are the sons and daughters of aging parents who have provided supports at home for many years. These parents now expect support from the association. The lifetime commitment these parents have made to their sons and daughters has saved the government significant amounts of money over the years, and the parents understandably now expect the government to provide assistance when they are no longer able to do so.

The association calculates that 32% of its waiting list is comprised of people who are currently living at home with aging parents. The government recently announced it would be inserting an additional \$15 million into developmental services, \$6 million of which will support the service needs of adults who live at home and are cared for by their aging parents. If the association's waiting list is typical of community services in Ontario, we can predict that there are approximately 3,300 individuals living at home with aging parents and looking for support from associations. This does not include people who may be on the waiting list of other community organizations.

Six million dollars is hardly adequate to address this need. If it were used only to serve people wishing service from the associations for community living, it would amount to \$1,818 per person per year, which doesn't provide very much, obviously. In fact, associations for community living represent only a portion of the services in Ontario and it can be assumed that there are many more individuals living with aging parents than those we are aware of. Further, the \$6 million is not exclusively for individuals living with aging parents, but is to be used as well to support young adults who are leaving the school system, which is another area of need. OACL certainly appreciates the \$15 million, but it is difficult to get very excited about it given the scope of unmet needs we see every day.

Not included in Brantford's list of people seeking services are 14 teens, aged 14 to 16, who are wards of the children's aid society. There is an expectation that

residential and day services will be available for these young people when they turn 18, but there is no commitment of resources.

In addition to the ongoing pressure of people needing service, the association is having to respond to increasingly challenging needs of the people supported. The association is providing support to people with complex needs who have spent many years in institutional settings or who are diagnosed with multiple disabilities, in particular people who have a mental health disability as well as a developmental handicap.

The association is finding it necessary to provide increased staffing to respond to these individuals' needs, with no additional funding to offset the costs. Mental health services, which are feeling the effects of constraints, are not willing to or feel they are incapable of responding to the needs of these individuals. The association worries that stretching resources in this way runs the risk of placing staff and individuals who are being supported in dangerous situations.

In an attempt to keep budgets on track, the association had to close down services in its day programs for two weeks over the Christmas period, placing increased pressures on families and residential service providers.

As the association attempts to control resources within the association, external forces continue to provide additional challenges. During the recent dispute with doctors, a number of doctors have given up practising in Brant county. One doctor left a caseload of 4,000 people, including 5 individuals who are supported by the association. With the medical system in the area being overwhelmed, the association is having great difficulty in finding new doctors for these individuals. Further, the association is looking ahead and wondering how it will ensure medical support for people returning to the community from institutions as part of the current deinstitutionalization exercise.

As an example of the financial pressures facing the association, OACL recently received notification that their WCB premiums will be increased to \$38,000 this year and a similar amount next year. The area office of MCSS has indicated that this increase will have to be found in the base budget of the association. With few alternatives left for cutting, the WCB increase will likely represent a reduction of 2.5 full-time-equivalent staff positions for the association.

The Metropolitan Toronto Association for Community Living is the largest of our local associations. Size has in no way protected it from the pain of funding cuts. In 1995, MTACL identified a deficit of \$3 million. This was made up not only of the 5% constraint of the current government, but of the costs incurred as part of the social contract of the previous government and increased costs for items such as utilities or existing employee benefits for which there has been no additional subsidy.

In addition to the existing deficit, the association found itself faced with a number of growing costs related to such issues as WCB; cuts to public transit which translated into a reduction in Wheel-Trans services for vulnerable people; excessive reporting requirements and outdated funding formulas which drive up administrative costs and reduce flexibility to meet constraints; inad-

equate funding for the implementation of pay equity legislation, which has resulted in additional salary costs; and cancellation of subsidized housing projects. The result of this deficit and other pressures was that MTACL had to take a number of drastic steps, which included:

— Closure of two residential programs, which resulted in residents being moved to other programs and staffing

being reduced through attrition.

— Attempts to reduce and manage the cost of employee benefits, which resulted in a strike, as many of you know. The work stoppage has been going on for eight weeks, and it is based on the difficult position of the association trying to balance its budget and on the workers trying to protect the benefits they have. It's a very difficult situation.

— Elimination of 20 administrative and management positions which represent 22% of direct service manage-

ment.

- Temporary closures scheduled in residential

programs.

In closing, it should not be presumed that these two associations represent extreme or special situations. Community services all over the province are feeling similar pressures. OACL hears daily from local associations about the struggle to meet the needs of people with disabilities while being faced with shrinking budgets and ever-decreasing access to mainstream community resources.

We repeat, however, that this is only one small part of the problem. By far the cuts to mainstream community programs and services pose an even greater threat to people with disabilities. People with disabilities want to live their lives in the presence of other citizens, having access to all the resources our communities have to offer. As these services endure deeper and deeper cuts, their ability to provide supports for people with disabilities grows increasingly more restricted.

We'd like to thank the committee for giving us this opportunity to raise these issues. We hope this discussion will provide some insight to the government into the extreme pressures being felt by people with disabilities and the services that provide them with supports. We further hope that some positive ideas can flow from this process to help overcome many of these challenges.

We are now certainly happy to answer questions. 1720

Ms Lankin: Thank you all for being here today. There are a number of areas that I wish I had the time to explore with you. I am quite struck by your comments about the effects of the repeal of the Substitute Decisions Act and the Health Care Consent Act and what that means: not having rights advocates and the number of guardianships. It's an area I would like to get some more information on.

But I wanted to focus my question on some of the numbers that you do have in your brief with respect to institutional closings, deinstitutionalization, which I think all parties and most people in the affected community have agreed with as a general policy, that this is the right way to go. But it only works, of course, if the community services are funded.

The numbers that you have, or the expected support from the government, would be for \$68,500 per person. That was based on information from the ministry of the \$67-million funding for the community support side after downsizing. When the announcement was made July 23, that seemed to be supported by the over-\$60-million comment. I'm wondering what happened between then and when you actually found out, and how you found out, that the amount was only \$53.8 million, which meant a \$28,000 cut to the level of current support per person, taking it down to \$55,000 per person. What does that mean for the adequate delivery of services to these individuals as they are deinstitutionalized and brought back into a community setting?

Mr Turner: It's going to make it obviously much more difficult to do this successfully. There are a lot of one-time costs associated with deinstitutionalization, particularly to provide the required services for the individuals themselves. They've been living in this kind of a setting for many, many years. They have an institutional mentality, if we can use that phrase, and it takes a great deal of effort, individualized effort, to break this down and retrain people to live in the community. Once it's done, and it's almost always successful, then you have a different person, a person who can live in the community. But as the costs are eroded, the ability to provide this kind of extra service and extra training also gets eroded. If the costs only cover the physical side of it, then the potential for disaster is very real.

Ms Lankin: How did this amount of money get changed from \$67 million down to the \$53 million? When did you find that out? What was the explanation

for that from the ministry?

Mr Turner: I don't know. Gordon, can you deal with

Ms Lankin: Originally you were expecting \$67 million, the announcement was for over \$60 million, and then you found out it was only \$53 million. What happened? What was the change? How has that been explained?

Mr Gordon Kyle: I'm Gordon Kyle, a policy analyst with the Ontario Association for Community Living.

We understand that there will be additional money put into the system — \$13.8 million is in my head — to bring it up to approximately the \$67 million that was originally committed. The additional money, we are told, will be put into the system at some point down the road. It isn't necessarily going to be going in to direct services for people but will be for other community development needs that are identified as the process goes along. The explanation is that this is money that isn't available to the system until some of the facilities are actually closed down and some of the money for the operation of facilities is recouped.

Ms Lankin: So the upfront investment to ensure a successful transition for some of these people isn't going to be there.

Mr Kyle: It's less than we were expecting.

Mr Carroll: Thank you very much, gentlemen, for coming to spend some time with us this afternoon.

Mrs McLeod: And ladies. Mr Carroll: Oh, I'm sorry.

Ms Agnes Samler: I'm putting a black mark against his name.

Mr Carroll: Make it a small black mark, would you? Ms Samler: A small black mark.

Mr Carroll: You've made some very interesting observations about the need for more funding for people with disabilities, that they be taken care of in the community, and you've talked about several different areas. Then you go on to talk about changes that this government's made to funding for doctors, workers' compensation, transit, hospitals, education, subsidized housing, pay equity, recreation. You say that because we've changed funding in those models that's also negatively impacting people with disabilities.

Faced with \$100 billion worth of debt that we're trying to get our arms around and a government that is not able to pay all its bills, can you cut us some latitude somewhere to do something? Would you suggest we just keep spending at today's levels and keep running up the debt for our children to pay, or do we need to change the system somehow so that we're spending more money on

funding people rather than programs?

Ms Lankin: Perhaps you could forgo the tax cut.

Mr Carroll: I'm asking presenters for the answer,

Mr Turner: Part of our theme here is to look at systems, look at processes. There clearly are better ways to do things in many respects. One of the things we specifically mentioned is some of the funding. The funding formulae that are currently being used are 25 and 30 years old in some cases and they're used to produce X number of dollars which associations use to operate programs. If associations could be given a greater latitude even in how money is being spent rather than having to spend money in this package on these programs and this package on those programs, the same amount of money given with fewer strings attached, global funding as they call it in the community colleges —

Mr Carroll: You're talking about individualized

funding for people rather than programs?

Mr Turner: That's another point. I'm talking about global funding now. I'm not going to the next step of individualized funding. Instead of giving an organization \$10 million to do this and \$10 million to do this and \$5 million to do that and require it to do it, give the organization \$25 million and the organization then can create its own efficiencies; it can move money from program to program and run programs more effectively and more efficiently. That's just one suggestion of how we can do things better.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): Thank you for your presentation. It sounds as though, just in terms of the question from the government side, which could be addressed by the tax cut or by a number of another initiatives, there are choices we make. But probably more narrowly it's important that they understand the role of associations like yours and the lives of the people you're assisting, because there seems to be an inference that

there's overhead involved here.

I wonder if you can talk to us a bit. Obviously the strike is one unfortunate dimension, but the 5% cut and

some of the other constraints you've seen, how have those affected your ability to work for people?

I guess the other thing is that you shouldn't be held responsible for the fact that there are aging parents out there, that there is more need for intermediaries in the community to deal with it as a demographic reality, if I'm not mistaken, that is creating a lot of the demand for your services, as well as the government's own policies of deinstitutionalization. I'm just wondering how you look at your future and where does your viability start to become really affected in terms of being able to provide for what I think, unless I'm misunderstanding, is an increasing demand for the services of your association.

Mr Turner: The demand is increasing in one respect mainly — demographically. Overall the demand is not changing. But what has happened in this province over the past several years, and this is very specific to Ontario, is that as community programs were developed and as people were moved out of the institutions, many individual families decided, "I will keep my son or daughter at home. I will use the community programs to the extent that I can, but I will keep my son or daughter at home," rather than put that person into some kind of residential setting.

That was very noble and that was the sign of very powerful, strong parents and, quite frankly, saved the government lots of money because it wasn't the cost of residential care. Now these people are in their 60s, 70s and 80s — and their offspring are in their 30s, 40s and 50s — and they are saying: "We can no longer provide residential care for our children. We can no longer do it. We're just too old and too tired. It's up to the association to provide it." That's where they turn and obviously we are saying we cannot provide this service because of the funding base. We consider this a very specific funding issue which in a sense is new because it hasn't been talked about very much before and which the government has recognized by the fact that some of the money announced last week was earmarked for this, to meet the needs of aging parents.

The Chair: Lady and gentlemen, I'm sorry, the time has passed. I'd like to thank you for coming this after-

noon and presenting before us. We appreciate it.

#### JIM AND MARILYN DOLMAGE

The Chair: I welcome Jim and Marilyn Dolmage and their son Matthew. I understand you've been travelling from Orillia, so I hope it hasn't been too arduous. We may be interrupted later on, closer to 6 o'clock, by a vote in the House, so I'll just warn you about that. Thank you very much for coming.

Mr Jim Dolmage: Good. Thank you for having us. We had hoped that there would be four of us here. There are five of us in the family, excluding the dog. The dog really has no relevance other than to the family, but there

are three children.

Matthew is the oldest of our children and he has lived with us since he was two and a half months old. When he was born, he needed two fairly major surgical procedures. In medical jargon he was "failing to thrive" in the hospital, so they said, "You can take him home because he's not doing too well here." So we did and we fed him through a tube for the next year, and he grew and learned and put on weight, obviously, and came along wonderfully.

Over the years we've learned a lot from Matthew. He finished high school a year and a half ago. We looked at alternatives in terms of further education. There's a bit of an irony here in that those who often need the most education are given the least education. But there were no educational options beyond high school for Matt, so we've been looking for work. At the moment Matthew has three voluntary jobs that he works at. He is in charge of shredding confidential documents at Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital, which takes two half-days a week; he works at a human resources centre doing photocopying a couple of afternoons a week; and he puts student ads on to the computer at Georgian College for the student council there.

Matthew uses sign language and he uses a computer to speak. He comprehends but he has a fairly substantial gap between what he can tell you or talk to you about and

what he can comprehend going on today.

Matthew's dream, I guess, that we've talked about is that he would love to work full-time in an office, whether that's paid or supported, whatever. He has a real sense that he needs to get away from his parents, like most 22-year-olds do. He doesn't want to be in the house all the time. His other dream is to at some point in his life live in his own apartment, and if it would be an apartment building with an elevator, so much the better.

He has a sister, Leah, who is at McMaster, who really wanted to be here today but unfortunately had a class at 6 o'clock so couldn't be here and get back to the class as well. She is in second year. She's studying social justice and human rights issues. Leah's dream is to go to Leeds University and study disability issues in England for a year. A younger sibling is a boy, Jay. Jay's a long way away from us; he's in first year at the University of British Columbia. He received a scholarship offer out there that financially he simply couldn't turn down. The fact that tuition out there is \$1,000 less than it is here in Ontario is also significant, but that's an aside. Jay's dream is he wants to be a writer. He would also like to represent Canada in athletics if he's lucky enough to be able to do that. That's the children.

Marilyn and I have been together for quite a number of years as a married couple, and years before that. She has been involved with issues of disability most of her life, and she'll talk about that a little bit. Her first job was at Huronia Regional Centre in 1968. She went there as a social worker and did some very innovative things. She was the first person to arrange for the marriage of two residents there and she started to move people out into the community, which was a fairly radical notion in the 1960s.

When Matthew was born, Marilyn, of necessity, couldn't work full-time; however, she did manage to complete two more university degrees. The last civil service job she did after Matthew started to become more independent was working at a small facility in Gravenhurst, which was an institution that Marilyn was respon-

sible for moving the residents out of. She was so efficient at that that the institution actually closed a year ahead of schedule.

Having been an efficient civil servant, she was let go. I don't know if that's a pattern or not. But at any rate, since then she's been working for a consortium of groups in Ontario. It's called Building Inclusive Schools and it's working on setting up exemplary schools around the province where students with special needs or disabilities are integrated into regular classrooms.

Myself, I'm a high school teacher, so if I start to become a little pedantic, throw something at me. I was a very avid jock and very singleminded when I went into education. Matthew came along and changed a lot of things for me. He made me look at education in a different way. He made me look at social issues in a different way. I'm now the head of the guidance depart-

ment in a small high school.

All of the members of the department that I teach in also teach classes, so I'm very much in favour of some of the changes that are forthcoming in education because I believe if you're going to be in education, you need to be in front of students. When was Tony Silipo Minister of Education? It goes back a little bit. I was writing articles back in the 1980s about teachers getting a professional college. This is one that appeared in the Globe and Mail. I'm very much in agreement with that.

Matthew has made me in a lot of ways look critically at what I do in my own life and at some of the services that we receive and provide in our own lives too, simply because of some of the things he has had to go through. He has taught us that we've had to look for different ways of doing things. In the early 1980s we took the board of education that I work for, the Muskoka board, to the Supreme Court of Ontario because they wanted Matthew to go to a segregated school in another town. We lived in Gravenhurst, and they wanted him to move out of that setting and not go to school with his brother and sister. We lost that battle, but we learned a lot. We learned there are things worth fighting for, there are things that do change, but often that changes take time and they do take some energy. 1740

The positive story we want to talk about today is that special services at home have really provided Matt with a life. They've allowed Marilyn and myself also to go on with our lives. There's a lot of good that has happened and we want to talk about that. But Matthew, simply because of when he was born, has been at the leading edge of a lot of things. I'm sure most of you are familiar with David Foot's work. Probably a lot of you have read, if not everything in the book, portions of it.

Matthew at the age of 22 is in a different cohort. For those of you who haven't seen this, this is the population of Ontario — age up the side, horizontally the population in thousands, females on one side, male on the other. I'm just using the male side to depict where the population's at; the male-female are virtually mirror images. But Matthew's in this cohort here and he's coming from an age group, and it's represented by the individual dots, who are coming primarily out of regular classrooms and regular schools. They've gone to school with brothers,

sisters and friends. They've been living with their families. They've been working in their communities. They've gone to YMCAs in their communities and community activities and school dances and all the rest of it. They've been supported by family and friends.

This older cohort up here, the gridwork represents the fact that they've often been involved in community services since youth. Some of them have been institutionalized, some of them are in group homes. You'll notice, however, that I have placed some individual dots up in here and those represent perhaps some of the People First of Ontario whom you heard earlier today. Not to say that all the people in this cohort have had the background that Matthew has, but a lot have, and particularly the younger ones coming up have had these kind of experiences and have a whole new set of expectations.

It's maybe an irony that I'm four years from retirement, but I'm considered to be a young parent because I'm a parent of this new cohort. Matthew has seen things like educational integration happen in his time. He has looked at jobs in the community instead of jobs in a workshop or some of the other possibilities. In the old model, I guess, the government took over for the family, put in all of the time, all of the money and all of the effort. In this new model the family, certainly all the way through school, puts in most of the money and virtually all of the time in terms of connecting the child with the community.

It's not my intention to leave you with any paper. I have copies of all the overheads but what hopefully can happen is we can get some of our ideas across because I'm sure you're going to be having reams of things to read. If you did want copies of any of these overheads I have made them, but like I said, I did not really intend to hand anything out.

Marilyn is just going to talk about the framework in terms of how Matthew fits into things, our lives in the community, and she's going to talk about special services at home, what it has meant to us, what it has done, the years we have used it. She's going to also mention an alternative model which you're not just hearing from us, I'm sure, but we'd like to talk about that possibility too.

Ms Marilyn Dolmage: We want to talk about three particular areas. One is the impact of inclusive education on people's lives and on expectations of government as well. Second is special services at home, a program which pays families small amounts of money to provide the supports when and where they're needed in the community. But along with that, there's an alternative model that extends that type of funding further to provide more options in terms of individualized direct funding, which doesn't exist yet in Ontario. The third thing we want to talk about is the impact of family networks and the support they provide.

I just want to add to what Jim had said. When you look at the older group, those people have come to expect some very, very expensive services in Ontario and their lives require those. What we want to say is that if action is taken now, if change is undertaken, new models entertained, then the younger group of people who have more connections in the community can be supported at much lower cost. It's really a very good-news story for

all of us, as politicians, as taxpayers, as community members, because there is a less expensive and more effective model available.

I understand that you're hearing from a variety of perspectives and you're going to be given a lot of facts. What we wanted to do from our personal story is give you a bit of a framework with which you may develop a perspective on what you hear over the next couple of weeks. It's a perspective that I think works because all of our lives are both political and personal and it looks at what we see as the meaning of community. I'm going to put this up now with that little drawing. Can you pass it to me?

We don't see community as a variety of agencies but we see it as connections in people's lives. I think any of us can be the person in the middle of these circles. It's very straightforward. Close to us is the circle of intimate connections, of people who are very close to us in our families and relationships. The next layer is a friendship circle. You could put people as Xs here. You could examine your own life in that regard. The next level, for simplification, is associations, people we may see through our work or our other kinds of connections, the clubs we belong to and so on. Then on the outside circle are the paid services. I think, as you're looking at the responsibilities of government, this has a lot of relevance. We can see our own lives this way, we can look at Matthew's life that way and lives of other people I have known.

One of the people I never got to know was my own brother. When I was four years old, my brother Robert was born. Because he was diagnosed with Down syndrome at birth he never came home. He disappeared; he was never seen by his mother or his sister. I had expected to look after him and he was gone. Where he went was to an institution and the decision was made at the moment of diagnosis that for all of his life he would have no need for family, no need for an intimate circle. No one would ever care for him because they loved him. But what would be put in place was an array of services, 24-hours-a-day paid support.

His circle looked like that: one lonely little person in the middle of some paid supports; no family, no friends, no community connections. Yet it's not just life in an institution that creates that kind of picture. Life in community services can look the very same. There may be no family connections. The family may have lost their connection from stress and other factors, through separation. But there are some supports in place and how many supports depends on how much funding is provided, and that's a very important issue to this person in this circle. The dotted Xs I've put as indicating cutbacks, the effect of cutbacks on those paid supports, and it's a very vulnerable picture.

This is more of a picture for that younger cohort that Jim talked about in David Foot's graph. They've had some family connections, the family has been preserved in various ways or families have stuck to their guns. I think you heard a presentation like that earlier this afternoon. There are some paid supports in place, but those paid supports haven't developed the associations and the friendships. Paid supports can do that, but they have to be oriented in that direction. You can work from

the outside in sometimes for people. But the danger here is that some of these paid supports can be cut back, which puts more pressure on the families. Families experience pressure for a variety of reasons. If that breaks down, you have a very vulnerable situation, similar to those we've heard about in the news over the last several years, where family pressures have increased too much.

In Matthew's life we have attempted to give him the same kind of circle as we enjoy and his brother and sister enjoy. Sometimes we're seen as wanting too much, because relative to other disabled people this is a very rich picture, but it's what our goal has been. It's what has driven us. The advice at birth, though, was to find a nice place to put him in. We'd been there. My family had experienced that and had not seen that as an answer, so we rejected the placement at some place like Christopher Robin nursing home. There were no programs available 22 years ago, no family support programs. So in the early years we helped created the supports, and they grew with our community and with our efforts.

We tried segregated school, as Jim has said, and found that Matthew was regressing, frustrated. He had no role models of positive communication, he was separated from his brother and sister, and what we saw was that we were starting to lose that inner circle. The brother and sister who had been his greatest advocates were starting to maybe be embarrassed, to maybe say, "He doesn't need to come to my school." They were challenging us in lots of ways and we said: "That circle has to remain strong. What can we do to preserve it?" So as Jim said, we went

through a legal process.

The way we resolved that for our own family, to keep that inner circle together, was to move to another community, because then as now, the legal processes for families to disagree with school placement decisions are extremely frustrating. Nothing has changed in that regard since the early 1980s. There are still families spending a great deal of money and school boards spending a lot of money to fight to keep kids out. To us, that's the vital link, to keep that family going, to keep the connections with the community. It was through regular class placement and support in a neighbourhood school attended by all three of our children that we've kept those circles open for Matthew. That was the most important thing. Special services at home helped us do that.

Very briefly, we received a little bit of money so Matthew could go to Beavers. We had the Beaver leader call us and say, "Where is he? He should be in Beavers. All the other kids are," which was a rare and amazing experience for us. So we found a little bit of special services at home money to send someone with him to support the Beaver leader to do some things differently, for one thing. He also got help to go to Cubs, but by the time he got to Scouts, the kids knew him and he knew them and they could support and trust one another. So we could drop him off at the door like all the other parents

were doing.

We worked with the YMCA and received a little bit of extra support to set up a day camp that was inclusive so that Matthew could attend programs as a teenager. He was a volunteer as a teenager with no paid support, just with those inner circles. So a little bit of special services

at home money built some very important links for Matthew. He also gained a lot of communication skills.

Is that a call for your vote?

The Chair: Yes, it is. We'll give you a minute and a half to wind up, if you could, but we'll have to go.

Ms Dolmage: Really? And we don't get a second

Mr Dolmage: Would you be back after the break? We're quite willing to wait around.

The Chair: Yes, we can come back. What's the wish of the committee? Come back for another 10 minutes or so?

Mr Dolmage: We'd need 10 minutes. That would do it.

The Chair: Can we agree that those who don't have other commitments will come back for 10 minutes? Okay, thank you.

The committee recessed from 1754 to 1806.

The Chair: If you would like to resume your presenta-

tion; sorry for the interruption.

Ms Dolmage: We've talked about how Matthew's life through the teenage years was an attempt to fill in those circles. Another thing I should mention is that because he was in a regular high school, he had access to cooperative education programs for job training. That's evolved into some volunteer work, and we hope eventually into a full-time job.

But what we have to reflect on is, what if we'd followed advice? What if Matthew had lived, or perhaps died, at Christopher Robin home? One option from Christopher Robin, which was closed after an inquest and so on into deaths there, was that some people with Matthew's needs live still at Bloorview hospital.

Jim has some information about costs.

Mr Dolmage: This is from 1994. The sums have changed but the ratios remain the same. Special services at home is a small bite of the budget; I appreciate that. The fact that it hasn't been recognized — it's a new model, it's a different model than the majority of the funding, and to me it's really the future of funding.

In 1994 there were 10,000 families. It's important to appreciate that quite often on this side you are looking at services to individuals, and on this side, with special services at home, you're talking about services to families. When Matthew gets out and goes to work, there are impacts not just on Marilyn, myself and the siblings but on grandmothers and other family members as well when they see that he is out doing things that he's happy about

and proud of doing.

Just going down, things like Bloorview, in 1994 you're talking \$235,000 per annum. You're talking also about other things, about 100% of the needs of the person being taken care of here in this left-hand column. Matthew just got a new wheelchair. Assistive devices pays for a new wheelchair every five years. Matthew is in and out of the car, in and out of the van, in and out of the house several times a day. His wheelchair didn't last five years; it lasted four years. Assistive devices paid for 60% of the new wheelchair. My insurance policy, which is at no cost to the taxpayers, picked up another chunk, and Marilyn and I picked up another chunk of it.

We expect that we will be funding Matthew to the same degree that we're funding his brother and sister in that transition between high school and whatever comes afterwards.

Special services at home: I did a survey last summer and I received just over 100 surveys back. Of those that I received back, 72% of the families had had their grants reduced. Their 1995 grants had averaged \$4,980; their 1996 grants had been cut to \$3,411. Matthew's grant was cut over 50% from what we needed. We had to appeal. We're still going through the appeal process.

Ms Dolmage: Maybe just while you have that chart up with the comparison of services, the costs of programs and supports, the other option for people leaving Christopher Robin home, for example, has been to set up a full-service system around that person 24 hours a day, usually a group home, very highly staffed, lifelong support, annualized dollars. For ever and ever those moneys are dedicated to those individuals for 24-houraday support every day of the year; a great deal of money spent on equipment. We have no home renovation assistance — volunteers and a lot of financial security in terms of the lives of those people but not the security of people in their lives.

When you cut back a program like a group home for someone who left Christopher Robin home, those cuts can sometimes be taken out of administrative costs. I know that's the ambition anyway. When those costs are cut, who is concerned? Not just individuals, but the executive director certainly, the board of directors, the staff group, sometimes unionized. Families can be organized very much together, so there's a whole amount of power and impact to any kind of funding cuts. There's a whole way of organizing people. You've heard some of that this afternoon, what happens when constraints happen to an agency program.

We also wanted, though, to paint you the story of that other side of that graph, of the less expensive supports where families are contributing most of their time and money. In Matthew's experience with almost a 60% cutback in May 1996 in his hours, there are no administrative costs. Special services at home is 100% job creation. It goes straight to hire a worker, so there is no slush to be eliminated. The cuts come directly out of the individual's life and opportunities.

Mr Dolmage: Let me just talk to that for a second. The Barrie area office, as an example, is the one we're most familiar with, but I did research. I got surveys from all across the province, and one of the real problems — you talk about the inequities in education. You want to look at inequities, look at special services at home.

There are 12 area offices now. Some of them have no waiting lists. In some of them the parents are completely satisfied. This year, some area offices had an increase in funding. Toronto was an example, an additional \$300,000 in special services at home funding. The Barrie area office had \$1 million taken out of the budget for special services at home this year, which is why in virtually every report I got back from families in Barrie, yes, they had cuts. Those cuts averaged 30%, which is a much more drastic cut than any other program that I'm aware of in the province has taken. But in terms of the Barrie

area office, a small amount of money goes into special services at home.

There's an office budget to begin with, and I can't get the figures, but I presume it's a sizeable chunk. There's \$42 million that goes to transfer payment agencies. Special services at home gets \$2.5 million. The transfer payment agencies look after about 2,000 individuals. Special services at home looks after 1,300 families. That money, as Marilyn said, is 100% job creation. The money comes to us: We hire, we fire, we administer, we interview, we supervise. Families cannot be paid, by definition, in this program. His brother or sister couldn't be paid to help with him. We cannot be paid, which is why there's absolutely no overhead to this program. Every dollar that goes into special services at home results directly in service to the individual.

Ms Dolmage: The impact of the cuts: What hit us in May was that Matthew was threatened with not being able to go out of the house. We were threatened with job loss and financial burdens. The workers we were able to pull together as a team dedicated to Matthew, listening to his direction, were disappearing and they were able to go and get jobs in group homes at a higher rate. Some families in special services at home across Ontario are asked to pay their workers less than \$8 an hour. Some whole parts of the north are even less than that.

The bureaucracy says to the families, "Take it out of your workers, take it out of your hours, whatever, but you will be getting less money." Also, when we appealed our grant, they said, "Well, we're not convinced that there isn't some other way that Matthew could be supported, because we have less money in this pot than we need," but surely there is that big pot of the \$42 million, or whatever, of transfer payment agencies. They asked us then to go to the segregated programs, which we're known not to prefer because Matthew's life has gone in so many other directions. We were asked to get on a waiting list for what was a more expensive support option.

Mr Dolmage: This one sheet that I have is from Comsoc's estimates book this year. I look at things, and I'm sure these can be explained somehow by somebody, but to me they don't make sense. I look at what's happening with sheltered workshops in terms that the budget has gone, since 1994-95, from \$25 million to \$29 million; at the same time, the number of people involved has dropped from 7,300 to 3,500. In other words, the funding has gone up 20% while the number of people involved has declined by 50%. At the same time, special services at home has gone from \$31 million to \$36 million but the population served has gone from 9,000 to 12,000. In other words, there's been an increase in budget of 16% while there's been an increase in need of 33½%.

I look at the announcement about the extra \$5 million going into special services at home and I'm very cynical because I know last October 17 there were 923 people on a waiting list to begin with; at this moment in time I can guarantee you that with the growth there's probably over 1,000. That's going to take \$4 million right there. The Barrie area office was \$1 million short. That takes the other \$1 million. I'm a little disillusioned. I'm very happy that the money is there, but don't tell me that it's going

to be a big addition or it's going to make a big impact. It's going to make a huge impact to those people who have been on waiting lists — believe me, that will be a huge impact — but in terms of all of the people in the program, it's not going to increase services.

Ms Dolmage: With an increasing number of people leaving school, we're also concerned with the announcement a week or so ago of the \$6 million going to help the sons and daughters of aging parents who have been in that older cohort waiting for some expensive programs, in need of those, and also supposedly to meet the needs of some of the younger students finishing school such as Matthew. I think you've heard another presentation that explained that that money won't meet that need either.

What we're interested in, though, is exploring another kind of option that has been pioneered successfully by special services at home. Special services at home won't do some of the things that are needed in Matthew's future, and that is to allow him to leave home, allow him to find other people to live with when we're no longer available or no longer able. The model that gives him the support through the day to contribute to his community, to offer service to others, will not be there if he doesn't live with family.

Also, we're not supposed to talk about employment with special services at home. Matthew is employed as a volunteer and he's receiving support, but we have to call it developmental programming or parent relief. We can't call it what we hope it will be, support for employment, because if we want support for employment, there's another program, which Jim flashed up there on the estimates, called supported employment. It's been cut considerably. Matthew would not be considered eligible for most supported employment programs because of his particular physical needs. He needs somebody with him. He'd have to graduate from a sheltered workshop in order to go to a supported employment program, and we know his response to segregation is very self-defeating. That really won't happen. That route is not open for Matthew to participate in as one individual with a life in the community.

We're looking for an alternative that's been called individualized direct funding, so that the government has to trust families like ours. We hope they've been trusting us for all of these 22 years in supporting us in a variety of ways. At one time, when special services at home began, Frank Drea announced our name in the Legislature without our permission; nobody worried about that in those days. It recognized that special services at home is a very constructive option that rewards families, that thanks families for what they've done. We want that extension into Matthew's adult life.

In the province of Alberta they have such a model of individualized direct funding. In 1995-96, 2,100 people and their families received support averaging almost \$36,000 a person. We will lead the way and we would be glad to demonstrate this for others, because we think this kind of story gives people hope.

1820

**Mr Dolmage:** A couple of specific suggestions: Special services at home came into being in 1982. There

have been basic changes and assumptions since then. For example, in the Barrie area office, and it's probably symptomatic of those across the province, there's an advisory committee on special services at home. The chairperson of the advisory committee is a director of a transfer payment agency. The majority of the members of the committee are workers employed in transfer payment agencies. They all come out of that \$42-million bundle. There are two token parents on the committee that advises about this small pot called special services at home. Parents need to be put in charge of special services at home. We're the ones it impacts on and we're the ones who know about it, but that's not what's happening at the moment

The old assumption was that special services at home was a stopgap program until you institutionalized. That's not what's happening now. People are keeping their children, their young adults, their adults, at home. The worry for all of us now who do special services at home is that there are forms coming out that are asking to prioritize, and the hidden language is: "We're going to cut some people off. We have to know who deserves most, who deserves least, and we're going to cut those off who deserve least." There are some bothersome things in here like, "Please rate your family's level of stress." It's a pretty subjective kind of a thing, but obviously if I say, "Yeah, we're under more stress than somebody else," perhaps our funding will not be cut to the same extent.

Finally, an analogy brought up by a parent at a meeting we held last summer, and Al McLean loved this one, was, "Where do we raise our cattle?" He said: "You know, it's like the system that we went through as farmers a few years back. We had all our cattle in the barn and we kept them in the barn. We fed them in the barn and we gave them lots of antibiotics and we found out we had to pull a veterinarian in an awful lot. It wound up costing a lot of money and actually the results weren't that good. We've now gone away from that and we're now raising out cattle out in the pasture. We're finding that we have lower vet bills and lower feed costs. and the end result is healthier cattle in the end." This gentleman said, "You know, it impresses me in special services at home that we've got a better way, but we're being put out into a pasture with nothing to eat in it."

The Chair: Thank you very kindly for coming all that way today and a very interesting presentation.

**Ms Dolmage:** Do we have time for questions? **The Chair:** How about one question from each side?

Mr Shea: I'd like to pick up on at least one point. The time is not available for us to go into the depth that we'd like, but I first of all would like to express, I'm sure for everybody on the government side, how much we appreciate your sharing your story with us. It's helpful for me to hear particularly and I'm sure it is for everyone else.

I was impressed with a number of points that you raised, not least of which is how we should consider the relationships between home care and the institutionalized mentality that has developed over a number of years and how that's played its way out in terms of funding. That's an issue that we could come back to at some length. You finished off with that.

But at the very beginning of the presentation I was impressed as well to see how Matthew's involved in a number of areas of employment in the community. The word that hit me there was "volunteer" at this point. Obviously we're looking for other kinds of hopes for him and I'm not unmindful of your sensitive comment about where he will be in the future and what his support systems will be.

With that in the background, have you been made aware of some of the new directions? Certainly the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture has moved for the equal opportunity plan, and that is the development of the abilities in the workplace program and the Web site for information to help connect employers with Matthew and so forth. Have you been made aware of that new program?

Ms Dolmage: Not particularly. We find, though, that Matthew often falls between the cracks with those programs, that those programs deal better with people who are very motivated on their own, who have only physical disabilities and not, say, communication and developmental delays. At the moment, we think there are some supports for employment for Matthew that are out there, that are available, depending what happens with vocational rehab for one thing, I suppose. We are left as a family trying to gather a team around us to come up with the concept, with the idea, and we have to sell that

We're pleased that some corporations have done that. Laidlaw Transport, for example, has won an award this year from the Canadian Association for Community Living, and it thinks it could convince other employers to open their minds. We've been inspired by people with disabilities who have broken those barriers.

to the business community.

We know there are some supports there. We've mostly experienced falling through the cracks. That's why we would like to be able to have Matthew direct his own support system with our support, with the support of people around — not to get to the breaking point where he no longer has our support. We think those connections that he's established throughout his high school years will work. That's how the rest of us get jobs. But we need some funding to plant the seeds that are going to grow into that.

Mrs McLeod: Just let me add my thanks to the Dolmages for making the trip in once again, because it's important for us to hear from you. Your leadership role

in the whole area of special services at home has been extremely important.

I take due note of both the plea you make for the importance of special services at home and the fact that \$5 million does help the waiting list but still doesn't really meet the needs for adequate levels of support for families across the province. I also just wanted to emphasize that if there'd been a little bit more time and we'd been able to explore the alternative that you've proposed, what happens for the adults who are now ready to move out of their homes or in homes where parents are aging and are simply not able to provide the care that was an issue that was also raised by the Ontario Association for Community Living. Of the \$15 million in funding that was announced, \$6 million of that was to go to support those alternatives, but it is, according to the OACL, \$1,818 per person just for the people now on the waiting list.

I just want to reiterate the fact that these programs are so important. They're clearly effective; they're meaningful for the individuals. They're also cost-effective, but you've got to have at least enough food in the pasture to be able to make it possible.

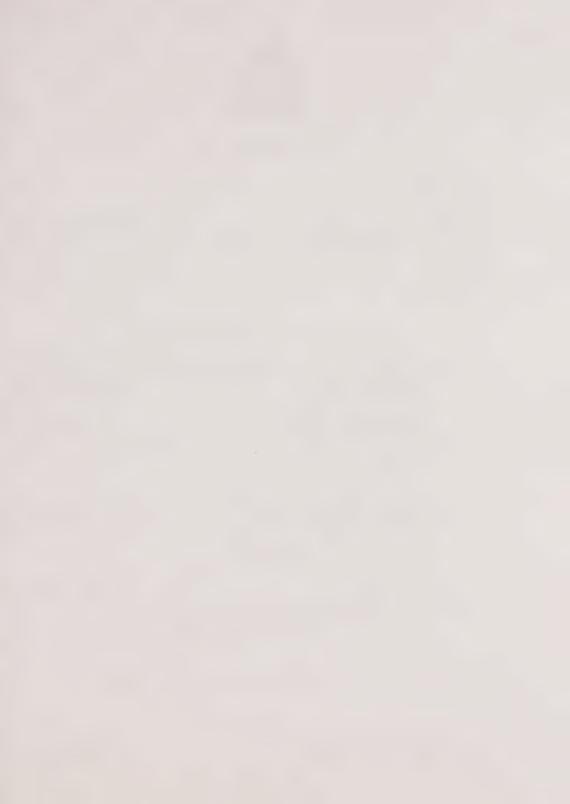
Ms Dolmage: I guess what we missed in the shuffle this afternoon was what we need for a plan. What we had would cost around \$26,000 a year for Matthew to have a full, meaningful day of contributing to his community in whatever way that evolves at the moment. He may not continue to need that amount of money. But that's compared to Bloorview hospital, for which he is clearly a candidate. He could have spent his whole 22 years in that kind of an environment, which now costs well over \$600 a day. We have to look at those kinds of alternatives, and it's very clearly best for him and best for the people of Ontario in financial ways and in relationships that can build.

The support we had when he left school in June 1995 was exemplary. It created all kinds of links for him. That gave us hope and was an inspiration for other families. We've always tried to do that. We've always hoped that others would be inspired, because you have to see some of these things happening. We haven't had those pictures to aspire to before.

The Chair: Thank you very much again for coming. The committee will adjourn and resume tomorrow afternoon at 3:30.

The committee adjourned at 1828.





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\*Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand PC)

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\*In attendance / présents

#### Substitutions present / Membres remplaçants présents:

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William L) for Mr Gerretsen Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea PC) for Mr Jordan

Clerk / Greffière: Ms Tonia Grannum

Staff / Personnel: Mr Ted Glenn, research officer, Legislative Research Service







S-41

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## Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 21 January 1997

Standing committee on social development

Funding for persons with disabilities



## Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36e législature

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 21 janvier 1997

Comité permanent des affaires sociales

Subventions aux personnes handicapées

Chair: Richard Patten Clerk: Tonia Grannum Président : Richard Patten Greffière : Tonia Grannum

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#### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Tuesday 21 January 1997

#### ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

#### COMITÉ PERMANENT DES AFFAIRES SOCIALES

Mardi 21 janvier 1997

The committee met at 1533 in room 151.

#### FUNDING FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Consideration of the designated matter pursuant to standing order 125 relating to the impact of the Conservative government's funding and funding cuts on persons with disabilities and their families.

The Chair (Mr Richard Patten): We'll reconvene the meeting at this stage. I understand Mr Gravelle has a

question he wanted to pose. Very brief.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): Thank you very much. I just wanted to address an issue. When we had our first presentation yesterday, I know that Mr Carroll indicated to the first presenter that regardless of the downloading on our municipalities in terms of services, the province will continue to set standards.

I would appreciate some clarification on the mechanism that's being put in place to establish those standards as well to maintain them, if that's something he can endeavour to find out for us, what that is; also whether indeed there is going to be any consultation process put in place to either set those standards or maintain them. That would be very helpful.

Mr Carroll appears to be nodding.

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): Yes. You're talking about not anything specific you're looking at, just

standards in general for the whole area?

Mr Gravelle: I think you were saying, regardless of the recent downloading in terms of health and social services, that the province would maintain or set standards, have standards set to ensure that services continue to be provided. I guess what I'm curious about is whether there's any way of guaranteeing that will be maintained and what standards are being set; also if there's going to be consultation as part of that process.

Mr Carroll: Just to correct the terminology, it's not a process of downloading; it's a process of exchange. I'll

undertake to do that.

#### KIDNEY FOUNDATION OF CANADA

The Chair: We call our first witnesses, from the Kidney Foundation of Canada. Welcome. As you're settling in, you have half an hour. Any remaining time following between your presentation time and the half-hour is shared equally between the three parties for comments or questions, that sort of thing. We begin the questioning with the Liberal Party this afternoon because we ended up with the Conservatives yesterday. Please proceed. Could you identify yourselves as well, please.

Mrs Janet Bick: Good afternoon. My name is Janet Bick. I'm the manager of provincial advocacy programs for the Kidney Foundation in Ontario. I'm also a kidney transplant recipient and former dialysis patient. I'll ask my colleague here to identify herself as well, then we'll get on with the presentation.

Mrs Marg Van Dusen: My name is Marg Van Dusen. I sit on the government relations committee of the Kidney Foundation. I am also am a renal social worker. I'm president of the Canadian Association of Renal Social Workers and have had considerable experience in working with dialysis patients and will speak from that experience.

**Mrs Bick:** The Kidney Foundation has grave concerns about the impact of the policies of the current government on the provision of treatment and support services to kidney patients. We appreciate the opportunity to share these concerns with this committee.

Over 7,500 Ontarians are currently being treated for end-stage renal disease. Approximately 55% are receiving some form of dialysis, while the rest have had a kidney transplant. There is no cure for end-stage renal disease. Left untreated, it will inevitably lead to death within days or weeks. The number of new patients is growing at a rate of 10% to 15% per year, and indications are that these numbers could increase even more.

Individuals diagnosed with end-stage renal disease will require some form of renal replacement therapy, that is, dialysis or transplantation, for the rest of their lives. It is critical to understand that unlike many other conditions, where individuals are treated and then released from the hospital system, having kidney failure means an ongoing attachment to a renal program for patients and families.

Individuals with kidney failure face tremendous physical, psychosocial and financial burdens. Many people with kidney failure face extraordinary costs related to their chronic illness: transportation to treatment, special equipment, medically necessary prescription and over-the-counter drugs which often are not consistently covered by hospitals, private health plans, the ODB or Trillium. Support services available until recently to patients through the hospitals — for example, drugs, nutritional supplements, meal allowances and accommodation costs for training that is only available at a distance from home — are being continually eroded.

Living with kidney failure imposes continuing stresses on patients and family members, including coping with treatment restrictions, financial worries, strains on spousal and family relationships, threat of transplant rejection, side-effects of drugs and threat of death.

Our concerns over the impact of funding cuts on people living with kidney disease cover a variety of areas. Transportation to treatment is an ongoing challenge for many dialysis and transplant patients across Ontario, especially those who receive treatment three times per week, every week for the rest of their lives. The government's cuts to transit commission funding have forced municipalities to cut back on specialized transit services for the disabled, frail elderly and chronically ill. Not all dialysis patients need to use these services, but for those who do, it is an essential one.

In Metropolitan Toronto, for example, the underfunding of Wheel-Trans threatens to put many dialysis patients at risk. At the beginning of 1996, 454 patients were using Wheel-Trans for trips to dialysis. As a result of new eligibility criteria put into effect in June, many of these patients were declared ineligible.

Underfunding has led to a process which looks only at very narrow criteria and ignores the inability of individuals to safely navigate the regular TTC system or the need for the ride, which is often related to medical urgency. Underfunding has created a two-tiered system, where those with disabilities must pay a \$25 registration fee to use public transit while the able-bodied do not.

It is only through the untiring efforts of the central Ontario branch of the Kidney Foundation that dialysis patients in Metro have been given a temporary reprieve. Individuals who receive dialysis treatment and who have been denied unrestricted service will be granted restricted services to and from dialysis treatment, but only until June 30. We have no idea what will happen after that.

The Conservatives promised there would be no cuts to funding for the disabled. The provincial government must take responsibility for the impact of their funding cuts to municipal transit commissions. The government's most recent announcements regarding cost-sharing with municipalities is a further abdication of their responsibilities in this regard and can only have a negative impact on transit services for the disabled.

Another important transportation issue for kidney patients is the northern health travel grant. Patients who live in the north and are having a kidney transplant, or those who require treatment for complications of surgery and other types of treatment not available locally, must travel to Toronto.

For example, the northern health travel grant currently pays a maximum of \$420 for return travel to Toronto from Thunder Bay. While the actual cost of a regular economy fare has been steadily increasing and currently stands at over \$900, the amount of the travel grant has remained the same. The additional cost to the patient is now over \$500.

Some patients may have to make several trips per year. It is not always possible to arrange travel that takes advantage of more favourable fares. Many patients are unable to work and their only income is from a disability pension. This extra cost only adds to the already overwhelming burden of kidney failure.

The Kidney Foundation has very limited resources to assist these patients. We receive no government funding and operate all programs and services to northern patients through the generous support of the communities in the region. We urge the government to review its reimburse-

ment policies for the northern health travel grant and update them to reflect current travel costs.

Drugs are another issue for patients. The promise of the Trillium program to ease the financial burden of high drug costs is slow in being fulfilled. The program has the potential to increase access to drug coverage for many individuals. However, there are many issues which must be addressed first in order to make it work well. These include deductibles that are set too high, basing the deductible on the previous year's income, and the need for people to reapply each year.

Patients are reporting to us long waits of up to six months to have an application approved and further waits to receive payments for drug costs already incurred. Patients, renal social workers and Kidney Foundation staff are experiencing considerable frustration in contacting the Trillium program. One patient was told that Trillium staff was too busy working on approvals and therefore did not have time to process the receipts of those already approved.

Cuts to social services at the municipal level are having a negative impact on access to necessary supports and assistance. Items previously covered by local social service agencies, such as blood pressure cuffs, weigh scales and other things that are used as part of the daily treatment regime for patients dialysing at home, are no longer funded.

Assistance with the cost of accommodation and meals for patients who must travel to a regional centre for training, to access surgery, dialysis treatments and other related procedures is extremely limited or not available at all. This is a particular concern for patients living in northern Ontario, where the regional dialysis program may be a considerable distance from home.

Cuts to the GWA benefit and the increased difficulty in transferring people to FBA are creating extreme hardship for some patients. We'll talk to that a little more later.

Another large concern is the inadequate funding of dialysis services. In August 1995 the former Minister of Health, Jim Wilson, announced the allocation of \$25 million to expand dialysis services across the province. While this was a welcome announcement, it has not gone a long way towards solving the overcrowding conditions in Ontario.

According to the Ministry of Health's own estimates of 15% growth, that funding was to provide only for one year's growth. That one year has passed, and only a portion of the projected spots are available. In the meantime hospitals with existing dialysis programs are being expected to absorb the growth in demand.

In a report to the Minister of Health last June, the Ontario Hospital Association pointed to a lack of appropriate funding for existing dialysis services, for which hospitals are forecasting growth in 1996-97.

Results of a recent OHA survey of hospitals providing dialysis show an increase in services of 32% since 1993-94. The report warned that in the absence of adequate funding for the service, clinical care, including the treatment of patients with end-stage renal disease, will be adversely affected. A JPPC end-stage rental disease funding working group struck in response to the report

was to have developed a new costing and funding methodology by October 31 of last year. It has not yet submitted its final report.

In the meantime, many existing programs continue to struggle to provide adequate dialysis care for all those who require it. Patient care and access to treatment are being adversely affected. In addition, other funding cuts to hospitals are also having their impact. Some programs have introduced more part-time, and sometimes less experienced, workers into dialysis units. A number of the new facilities recently opened have not made any budgetary allocation for social work and dietitians. Some units have cut back on the number of social workers and dietitians available, thus increasing caseloads and limiting patient access to the supports they require. These changes are causing increased stress and anxiety for dialysis patients who form long-term, trusting relationships with their health care team.

I would like to share with you a portion of a letter from a patient in Windsor expressing his concerns about

staffing changes in his dialysis unit.

"As a dialysis patient, I must feel safe and unthreatened. I have learned to know and trust the nurses who administer to me in my life support system. New, inexperienced faces, constantly changing, causes an insecure atmosphere and stressful environment...a place I don't want to come to," but he doesn't have much choice. "On top of this, 11 inexperienced individuals are to practise on me while they get their confidence. The thought is terrifying!"

I'll now turn it over to Margaret Van Dusen to give you a little more of a sense of how these cuts are affec-

ting individual patients.

Mrs Van Dusen: The words that Janet has spoken from these patients are something I commonly hear with new patients on dialysis, the fears. Dialysis is truly life

support. Without it, patients will die.

My experience in my own life is that I'm fortunate not to have had chronic illness, but I've been face to face. I've been with this program for five years, and prior to that working in the health care system since 1973, so I know many people who have had chronic illness in my life experience. I know that these patients I deal with and their families have firsthand knowledge, and the words they use and the things they say to me are so true.

In this country, we have been fortunate in the past to have had safety networks, but I fear they're fraying and

we're losing people through the cracks.

I speak of a case of my colleague. She reports on a 46-year-old man with diabetes, end-stage renal disease, heart disease — not an unusual situation. Having started dialysis as an employed person on long-term disability hoping to go back to work, his benefits ran out and his employer refused to take him back. He was forced on general welfare assistance, which meant he had an income now of \$425 a month, with a rental expense of \$525 a month, obviously not a situation which is going to be able to continue.

This man had been in the same apartment for 12 years. He had been stably employed. Of course, he becomes stressed, angry, more ill. He gets an eviction notice. Legal aid and advocacy from the social worker really

don't help get him back on track. He ends up having a situation where he has to pay \$100 a month out of his \$525. He gets further behind. He loses his apartment. He loses his telephone. He has no family help, not enough money. With the wait for housing geared to income or suitable places for a patient like this, it's not possible to find anything.

Home care can't serve a patient without a telephone. There's no leniency from Bell Canada. They run a business; they are a corporate entity. There is no leniency for these patients. It's not surprising that this person became more ill and more despondent and had a heart attack and died. My colleague says this is a victim of the Harris cuts. I believe her.

1550

Another case is of a 30-year-old man who became acutely ill in December and went on haemodialysis; another diabetic with visual impairments. Though he was in some vocational rehab through CNIB for a computer course, his illness forced him to cancel it. Again on general welfare, no available family, depression, illness, can't find affordable, decent housing on that level of income. Family benefits is a six-month wait, if he's deemed eligible and disabled enough under the new eligibility criteria. Presently the man is living in a hostel for a few weeks, but without suitable housing and a phone, he's not going to have the supports to manage.

A 38-year-old woman on haemodialysis with severe peripheral nephritis can't walk more than a few feet. Patients like this one are constantly at risk of having limbs amputated. She wants to take a few courses but is unable to get out because of the new rules of Wheel-Trans. She can get taxis for medical treatment through FBA, but no more. This bright, motivated, very disabled

young woman is a prisoner in her home.

These brief true cases outline problems with income support, housing, transportation — though not mentioned, the drug costs that Janet spoke about are leading to patients not complying with treatment. We're providing a very expensive treatment that's not going to work without these supports.

I would say that life support without quality and without necessary housing, transportation and income is not really life at all. These cases raise our awareness of chronic illness and how people become marginalized. Formerly high-functioning people no longer function

well.

Similar are the patients who need access to long-term care, those in hospitals. Often patients who live alone and don't have family caregivers will at some point require access to retirement homes, nursing homes or homes for the aged. Right now these renal patients are excluded from most facilities, with the exception of a very few homes that will accept a renal patient. The homes are concerned about the care of the dialysis access site, the diet restrictions, the multiple medications patients have to take. Just the arrangements for getting them transported to treatment — whose responsibility is it? — the need for more nursing time, and an increased level of expertise and regulations preclude the admission of individuals with catheters. A dialysis catheter is an access catheter.

So these changes in regulations in the homes allowing fewer hours of nursing care and the downloading of funding for long-term care to the municipalities are going to make it even more likely that these facilities are not going to be willing to admit these patients. Few chronic care beds are available to meet the needs of the patients.

I speak to you again of a few cases. These are my own cases. A patient, a 72-year-old diabetic with end-stage renal disease from Millbrook, recently trained on peritoneal dialysis, was admitted to Peterborough hospital with myocardial infarction. The coronary bed wasn't available at Oshawa, the regional dialysis centre. The patient had to do his own exchanges in an intensive care unit at that hospital because staff were not able to do the required four-times-daily treatments. He wasn't able to do it; he was too ill. He managed to get sometimes a few of the treatments in. None the less, he was discharged home. At home the failure worsened, and because he was unwell, he missed doing dialysis for a whole weekend.

With the arrival of his son, who flew in from BC, he was brought to hospital. He had a very complicated medical course: developed peritonitis just after admission, a week later cardiac arrest, was transferred to CCU, had heart block and had to have a pacemaker. He had to wait another four days in the ICU because he kept getting bumped by more urgent cases. At the same time he was in hospital he became infected with a gastrointestinal organism which was floating through the hospital and affected other patients. During the admission he ended up having to be converted to haemodialysis and finally was discharged 17 days later. He's fortunately now doing well on haemodialysis, coming in three times a week, but requires volunteer driving services to get him back and forth. His wife doesn't drive and he's too unwell to drive. If that service breaks down, I'm not sure what we will do.

Mrs H. a 74-vear-old woman from Bowmanville, was a transfer from Bowmanville hospital to Sunnybrook for treatment of a flash pulmonary edema and cardiac care. A diabetic with a previous nephrectomy and parathyroidectomy, she was started on haemodialysis and then trained for peritoneal dialysis. She had to have two catheters after having had a tunnel infection in one, and she underwent training. She was referred back to our program after discharge home; she only lasted a week because she couldn't manage her care. The therapy is actually the correct therapy for her, it meets her needs, but because of her intermittent confusion and the unavailability of a family caregiver, it prevents her discharge home. She requires a nursing home or a home for the aged long-term-care facility, but no facilities accept peritoneal dialysis patients. She occupies an acute care bed awaiting chronic placement, which is really inappropriate for her needs.

To date I've got three other patients in acute care beds and I know my colleagues in Toronto have many more, not just peritoneal dialysis patients but haemodialysis patients, where there are no long-term-care beds available or suitable for their needs. In some cases, dialysis patients are being virtually dumped on unprepared families because hospitals are being forced by cutbacks to try to discharge the patients.

The last case is of an 84-year-old farmer from Cannington, also a diabetic for 40 years, with diabetic complications of retinopathy, neuropathy nephropathy. He was hospitalized in Lindsay with acute heart attack, further extended into heart block, and ended up with life-threatening high potassium and acute kidney failure. He had acute-on-chronic failure, by the way, but this acute failure necessitated his urgent haemodialysis. There was no bed in our coronary care unit at Oshawa and no haemodialysis spots. He was sent to Orillia. Five days later they were able to transfer him back to Oshawa and he ended up with a permanent pacemaker insertion the next day. He requires ongoing haemodialysis and chronic care but needs a bed in chronic care and a haemodialysis spot in the hospital that's closest to his family, which is Credit Valley, but there's no bed available.

These cases are not untypical of cases that I deal with on a daily basis, whether they be cases where I'm trying to get services in the community or cases where people are caught in the hospital system getting inappropriate high-cost hospital care. As we speak, there are announcements being made at our hospital in terms of cutbacks to staffing. Janet spoke about the use of lesser-trained nursing care staff, and this will be the future for us. We will have patients who are going to cost the system a lot more. For dialysis patients, at \$50,000 a year for haemo, \$25,000 a year approximately for peritoneal, it's very expensive if we are not able to offer them optimal care so that they can manage their illness.

I would be happy to entertain any questions, along with Janet, from any of the members.

The Chair: We have three parties asking questions for two minutes each.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I wonder if you can help us as to why you think there's such a gap, and a growing gap, between what dialysis patients need and where the government's policy seems to be taking us. Have you been given an explanation? Some of this seems to be in a position of costing the government money. It seems very shortsighted. But what do you hear by way of explanation for the way that dialysis patients are facing their future right now?

Mrs Van Dusen: I hear that the programs we're providing, we're streamlining, we're re-engineering, and that services are there and it's going to be better. The practice in terms of my patients is that it's not getting better, that there are more people falling through the cracks, that services that once were available are not available. I'm not sure, Mr Kennedy, if that correctly answers what you were asking.

Mr Kennedy: I guess I was hoping there was something that maybe you didn't have time to bring out, because obviously there are elements you've raised today that seem fairly clear-cut. I don't know whether there's another side, a technical argument, but it seems we're headed for costs in the future that will be higher than the ones we're facing now.

Mrs Van Dusen: Absolutely. 1600

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): You've raised some really important points for us. The cases are poignant and I hope the government will address them.

One of the concerns I have is with the number of your patients who are on general welfare, subject, I assume, to the workfare policies of this government. I don't understand why you're having difficulty in having your patients transferred quickly to family benefits. They would have been subject to the 22% cut in welfare support, and that must be something you're monitoring.

Mrs Van Dusen: These cases that are coming before you are actually from a colleague in Toronto, and I'm having the same problem in the Durham community. Because the workers are not seemingly able to respond as quickly, it is taking three to six months to get patients transferred from general welfare to family benefits, which is the correct service for them and of course would entitle them to more generous benefits and services, transportation assistance being one of those. Many patients will not qualify for any kind of services if they don't meet the criteria for general welfare, but we're talking about medically sick people who do qualify.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): I certainly suggest to all of those individuals that they should be contacting their MPP's office, just inundating offices, because it's essential that you get them. We've had this problem before and perhaps it can be dealt with — at least some assistance — through constituency offices.

You've given some individual cases which I think are extremely helpful for us in understanding the plight that some of your clients are experiencing, but maybe in a broader way you could give a case profile — the general age, how many of the clients you advocate for are on social assistance — so we can get a better idea of how in-depth some of those particular problems are.

Mrs Van Dusen: The brief addresses the aging population, and that's certainly a factor; many of these folks are getting older. Our diabetic population is growing. There is literature indicating that we may be seeing up to 50% of the renal population as diabetic, which with their complex medical diseases and complex needs means they require a lot of services and support. Those are the people who, if they're not over 65, you're going to find needing the income support system. We do have patients who have only renal disease, end-stage renal failure, who are able to work, who are self-supporting and managing.

To give you an example of need, about a third or more of my population in Durham and the surrounding communities, which is about 200, including haemo and peritoneal dialysis, require some form of transportation support, be it transit, volunteer drivers or financial subsidies. To answer more directly, I gather it's about a third or more.

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): I'd like to thank you for coming today. I just want to add a few comments before my question. I have a number of newspaper articles here that talk about \$25 million being found for dialysis. I think it's important to note that this government has put this \$25 million into treatment for people who need dialysis and therefore have a kidney failure disease of some sort. As I understand it from the briefing note I got from the Ministry of Health, that would imply that when they all get set up — and I know it's taking time; we're waiting for hospitals to come up with plans — 580 new patients would be allowed to have kidney dialysis. That's

a 15% increase that my briefing note talks about, so I think that's a pretty substantial investment.

I also know that the district health councils have been asked, as they go through their restructuring, to look at the needs of the community and advise ways for hospitals and services in the community to meet the dialysis needs and the needs of people who have renal disease.

One of the things I was surprised you talked about — I guess in later times if we need to have a discussion on this we should talk. One of the priorities we've put on hospitals with their funding changes is that they have to protect dialysis, cardiac care and mental health, so it would seem to me that funding cuts to the dialysis departments in hospitals would be against the directions of the Ministry of Health. If you have a hospital that's doing something to take funds out of dialysis, I would like to hear about it.

The question we have is, has there ever been sufficient money in the system to meet the needs of dialysis patients?

Mrs Bick: I would venture to say no. Just to perhaps answer some of your comments, with regard to the \$25 million and the 15%, that was supposed to cover new patient growth for one year, from 1995-96. We're now almost into 1997-98. Not all of those spots are available, but those patients have sure materialized.

On the other cut -

Mrs Johns: There certainly hasn't been a cut to dialysis in Ontario. There's been an increase in funding.

Mrs Bick: We haven't said that there has been a cut.

The Chair: Excuse me, one at a time.

Mrs Bick: We haven't said there's been a cut; what we're saying is that it's still not being adequately funded.

Your other point around dialysis as a protected program: The Ministry of Health only specifically funds the treatment. If a hospital chooses to provide support services, like a social worker, dietitian and so on, that comes out of a hospital's global.

The Chair: Mrs Bick and Mrs Van Dusen, thank you very much for taking the time in preparing and presenting

to us this afternoon. We appreciate it.

#### CHRISTIAN HORIZONS

The Chair: We have now Christian Horizons, Mr Churchman. You have half an hour, and following your presentation, as you can see, there will be opportunities for questions. Welcome.

Mr Noel Churchman: It's a pleasure to be able to come and address this group. The first page of our brief is simply a bit of background. I am the executive director of Christian Horizons, which I believe is the largest transfer payment agency in the province serving people who are developmentally disabled. As such, I sit with others on the minister's advisory group, and as I'm there I also represent other faith agencies and cultural agencies around that table. What I'm here to talk about today is primarily rooted upon Christian Horizons and what we are or are not experiencing.

The second page in my handout deals with a bit of an introduction. I don't think my presentation will take more

than 10 minutes.

There can be little doubt that over the past 10 to 15 years, under the direction of all three major parties—and by the way, I wore a tie in which I was trying to get in blue, red and a little bit of orange and black; I was doing the best I could. All the parties have basically been doing the same thing over the years and we have got beyond our means. I recognize that. I believe we need, certainly, to begin with the redeployment of the funds and resources that we have. A lot more can be done with that than has been done, and I'm speaking not as an advocate but as an administrator, looking at what we get, how we are able to use it and how we can look for efficiencies. I'd like to suggest that as being the number one item.

Second, I don't think spending money is always the answer. We have found sometimes in our own services that we have had people overstaffed in group homes, in workshops and so on, and we have found that when we have reduced the staff in some of those situations the individuals have been much happier. They sometimes get very fed up going to a workshop and being programmed all day and then coming home and being programmed all afternoon and evening until they go to sleep. It's sometimes very nice to have fewer staff on and them able to have a bit of space and a bit of time. I think we all enjoy that. Of course, that's for the higher-functioning individuals.

Everyone wants a safety net, everyone wants support when they need it, and that's fair, but sometimes as we have reviewed our own services within our agency — we serve over 800 people; we have over 120 programs or sites across the province — in that whole area our experience has been, as we've gone back and sorted through in the last couple of years, that there have been some cost savings we've been able to do, a better deployment of staff and better deployment of some of our resources. We've been forced to do it; we haven't particularly liked it.

The next page deals with an analysis. Although talking about the cuts that we really don't like a whole lot, sitting around the table with the minister's advisory group it's become quite obvious, and even dealing with our own membership and parents across the province, that parent groups are listening very much to the point of their being empowered a little more in the directing of funds or in the purchasing of services or contracting the services for their sons and daughters and loved ones. It hasn't happened to a large extent. This particular government seems to be moving in that direction; it's not the first to move in that direction. It was done under the previous government and it was done under the Liberals before, each one taking steps to move people from facilities into the community and to gain greater input from parents. That's continuing, and I think the parents appreciate that.

They're all afraid of what it means to the various areas when it comes to funding. I've been with Christian Horizons since 1976 — Bill Davis was Premier — and through all the governments in between. I'd have to say that all three governments have added funds to developmental services, or at least protected the funds in developmental services. Unlike some of the other areas that

you might be talking about and listening to over a period of time, I don't think that developmental services has any political clout. I don't think they're very good at lobbying anything; nevertheless, I appreciate that kind of emphasis that is in place and the caregiving to protect the needs of those individuals.

In the middle of the analysis, really I think I'm talking as a businessman — I recognize that — a businessman with a heart, caring very much for the people we serve.

I think one of the problems we have today is a lack of competition. I think competition is good and I wouldn't want to see anything happen that would break down the competition. By "competition," I simply mean variety there in the place so that parents and families can choose and select and work with one another going through.

There is one area up in the Sault where all the agencies have been amalgamated into one superagency. At one point in time I believe that agency was thinking of going on strike; they were not happy with the kind of funding they were getting. The government had no other options; there was no competition. They couldn't go to another agency and say, "Can you help in this?" or "Would you fund new people coming into the community from facilities for whatever dollars are available?" because there was only one agency to go and deal with. I think it helps to have some variety.

There's a lack of standardization in services. I think the Provincial Auditor might be the person to deal most with that, whether you are getting equal dollars buying equal services and whether the Ministry of Community and Social Services really has a handle on what services it is providing. In the last couple of years there have been great strides taken in developing the tools, if you like. Currently in developmental services there's a level of service tools that has been developed, being standardized now, to be used across the province so that they can assess what services are being received, what the average cost is through all the various agencies and they can come up with a standard that they might expect the costs to fall into.

There's no incentive for cost-sharing with families. I think we need to strengthen that and give it some possibility. Maybe I'll talk about that a little bit later on.

There's a lack of accountability to the people receiving services. We sign off with everybody. We send in reports monthly, weekly and quarterly, or whatever it is, and we dot all the i's and cross all the t's, but the parents don't know what services are going through unless the agency communicates back and forth closely with them. I see that when it comes to individualized approaches to funding and contracting the parents will be much more in the driver's seat and feel that they have some accountability built in. The government then will have literally thousands of people scrutinizing the service that's going on and making informed decisions of where they're going to purchase the services to meet their needs and asking that they get quality for that.

There is no definition of the services that require funding at this point. I know the ministry is seeking to set that at this point in time and come up with a standard of what would be the basic needs for services in the future.

Business practices lack focus. They are undertaking initiatives without due consideration, assessing services beyond mandates. There are inadequate spending controls, and it happens within not only our agency but all of them.

I put in a last one down here: "Possible review of levels of remuneration. Need to define responsibilities and ensure that they are in line with other sectors, not just compared to other government-funded groups. Eighty per cent of our operating costs go to staff salaries. We need to ensure that we are in the business of supporting the disenfranchised person who is developmentally disabled." If it means that we can put some money into the family's hands so that they can get people to come in on relief for the weekend to help them in their home, evenings or things like this, and employ the individual for whatever it is, they'll get far better bang for their buck and they'll be able to keep much more in control and maintain the family unit.

I've already spoken about the amalgamation, so I won't go over that any further. The conclusion on that page is, "Savings are possible and current resources can be better deployed."

I have a strategy. First of all, we need a "process to determine a standard of service required by those seeking funding." I think the government is developing a tool right now with the level of services. Christian Horizons developed a tool on its own a couple of years ago where we went and interviewed all the people we serve, their families and their key people to determine what level of service they needed in support, whether it was one-on-one counsellor care, three-on-one overnight, maybe eight to one, what their food needs were, what their health needs were and so on. I think that is needed as a gate-keeper for people requiring funding in developmental services.

Second, require the consumer to contract for the services directly with approved service providers. No, you can't put the money into a person's hands and just expect them to use it all the way — they might invest it at the horse races to see if they can double their money or whatever — but you can put it into their hands or direct the money so that they have to spend it or contract with approved providers. Simple enough. If they aren't getting the service they want at the end of a year after they've contracted, they can turn it to another provider. By controlling the money, they can control the services that their sons and daughters receive. I think it helps.

If brokers or case managers are required because the families maybe have difficulty in doing this — and some families would have difficulty in doing this — I strongly suggest, and so would the other people you might hear from who sit around this table, those case managers and brokers have to be accountable to the family, not to a government agency. There's a conflict of interest. How can you possibly represent the needs, the interests, the values of the family if you don't even understand them? If you get a broker for your real estate you want one who represents you, and I think it's important, if there are going to be case workers and brokers, that they be accountable and paid directly from the family.

Third, require agencies to be accredited. I'm suggesting to you that there be an accreditation process. There are tools out there and there are a couple of organizations willing to do that. Get out of the business of going around and approving programs. Approve the accreditation process and then let the accreditation model take its place within the sector as the agencies go through. You'll get a more up-to-date and thorough review of the programs that are going on and make sure that the dollars are well spent.

Finally, provide income tax incentives to the people of Ontario. If they go with agency A, B, C or D, whatever it is, and they come and say, "This level of care is needed," and there are so many dollars available because of what that gatekeeping was in saying, "This level of funding is needed, but maybe that family desires something else," then if they wish to add to that, make it the contracted amount so that it's not just whimsical tax incentives. Make it, "Yes, we agree too that this is a viable service for the individuals and hence maybe there's some way that it can be worked into the Ontario income tax portion so they can get credit for that." The government won't get any more money — they will get less money — but at least the dollars will be well-spent and the families will be more involved, which I think is something we want to have happen.

General comments:

(1) Families are interested in contracting directly with service providers.

(2) I think that the above approach as we talked about it, and having the families doing the contracting and the working through and even incentives for income tax, strengthens family and the family unit, and I think we want to do that.

(3) Competition will force efficiencies. Providers who fail to deliver the good service for the available dollars will be forced out of business, and it won't require any political clout or going around and having the nasties, if you like, in it. I think it will work that way.

(4) You've broadened the base of support from the government to the families by providing incentives and involvement of the families.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Churchman. We'll begin the questioning with Mr Cooke. Five minutes.

**Mr Cooke:** Thank you for your presentation. I'm not sure that I have ever in the years that I've been around had a presentation from somebody whose name so closely resembles the organization: Christian Horizons, executive director, Noel Churchman. That's great.

Mr Churchman: I made it into Maclean's once.

Mr Cooke: I just have one area I want to explore with you. Over the years I've had the honour to be here, we've spent a lot of time on different select committees, and outside of select committees there have been a lot of very in-depth independent studies done, especially in the United States, looking at the American system, about competition in either the social services or the health services.

While there can be an ideological approach to saying that the more competition the lower the costs or the more efficient the services, all the studies that have been done have shown that what ends up happening is the more competition the more the cost, the reason being that the more beds you have, the more facilities you have in place, they all fill up, and if they all fill up, then govern-

ment ends up spending more money.

That's why you see hospital beds having to be closed and reorganization of the health care system. That's why government finally got a handle, a number of years ago, on the number of nursing home beds in the province. It used to be, what, 25 years ago, anybody who could meet the requirements to get a licence could open up a nursing home, and all those beds filled up because they were either paid by private insurance companies or they were paid, at that point many years ago before OHIP covered them, by welfare.

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While I know there's a ideological reason why some people think that competition is somehow going to improve services, lower costs, bring in more efficiency, all of the facts and all of the history and all of the studies prove exactly the opposite of that. I would just invite you to look at some of those studies that have taken place over the years and I think you'll find that it won't benefit our kids.

One specific question I have for you is that I'd like to get a better idea of what your costs are. What are your average annual costs per client or child in your facilities?

**Mr Churchman:** I'm sure you understand the tremendous range. We have individuals who require —

Mr Cooke: But I asked for average.

Mr Churchman: I'm not sure I can give you one. I can tell you what our budget is and I can tell you generally the number of people we serve. Our budget is, in round figures, \$30 million operating, and the number of people we serve on a 24-hour basis would be about 850. The number of staff we have is about 1,500. From that you can work out some figures. It doesn't reflect the people we would have in on weekend release.

**Mr Cooke:** Give me the range before my time runs out. You would have some range of what it costs. What's the upper end of what it costs to serve some of your —

Mr Churchman: The last individuals we took in at the closing of D'Arcy Place I believe came in at an annual cost per person between \$70,000 and \$75,000 a year.

Mr Cooke: I had some idea because I know a little bit about the facility back in my area, and I guess one of the things I've always heard, and I'm surprised it's not in here, is that a lot of parents who would like to have their family members at home would love to be able to have that level of money supporting them at home.

**Mr Churchman:** We probably care for or help families caring for their sons and daughters at home or with individuals coming in to give them relief and so on, funded through us, either through the ministry or through

our own donation base, numbering over 100.

Mr Cooke: Would you support a change in the system that would say if you believe in more competition, to heck with more facilities? How about supporting that that \$70,000 or in some cases — the ones I have dealt with in my community in your facility it has been over \$100,000 — saying that instead of coming to our facility we would support the family getting that \$100,000 or that

\$110,000 and build in the services at home and that would be a better system?

**Mr Churchman:** Absolutely. I would be very happy if we had no budget, the money was given to the families and they were able to shop.

Mr Carroll: Thank you, Mr Churchman. I want to compliment you on your tie. You haven't quite come to the level of our esteemed friend, Mr Shea, but it still is a nice tie.

The second compliment is it's nice to hear from somebody in this particular area who understands some of what we're trying to do and who understands that our goal in this is to devote more finite resources to the person we're serving rather than to organizations that were designed initially to take care of those people but some of whom may have lost their way a little bit as we've gone along. I compliment you for understanding where we're coming from. Very difficult decisions, as you've talked about, but ones that have to be made if we're going to get the spending of this province under control.

I want to talk just a bit about special services at home because obviously that's an area where you are heavily involved and it's a program that over the years — it started about 1982. There was a comment made yesterday that our ministry reduced funding for special services at home by 25% and then, to make us look good, made an announcement in January of this year that they were going to increase funding by \$5 million.

I just want to set the record straight that every year since 1982 funding for that program has gone up, and in actual fact the funding in 1992-93 was \$26 million; 1993-94 was the same, \$26 million; 1994-95 was \$29 million; 1995-96 was \$36 million; the same number in 1996-97, and with the announcement the minister made, it will go up to \$42 million in 1997-98. So we are increasing funding for special services at home to take care of those people who come out of institutions.

Mr Cooke: After there were cuts.

Mr Carroll: I want to get that on the record because there was a misconception about that yesterday.

You believe, I understand, in the concept of individual funding.

Mr Churchman: I do.

Mr Carroll: Did your organization always believe in that?

Mr Churchman: I was part of an accountability project down here in the legislative buildings for about five years preceding this past year or so when it was working towards individual contracts, putting together outcomes and so on. As soon as I began to put my head around what it was they were talking about, I was very much on side with it. I didn't see any downside to it at all. I saw the control going to where I thought it should go.

I think it's very important that there be sort of a gatekeeping to know that appropriate dollars are going out for appropriate services. I don't care then. The competition part of it of filling the beds and so on, that part of how much is available in order to purchase is objectively done by an objective third party. But I'm very much in favour of it.

**Mr Carroll:** Would you support the theory that, as a first step, we need to find where we are not spending money appropriately in the current system —

Mr Churchman: You're forcing that. It's happening. Mr Carroll: — as opposed to putting more money

into the system?

**Mr Churchman:** I think it's fair. I have to do that at home.

Mr Carroll: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Mr Shea I think has a question for you.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): I picked up on your observation that simply throwing dollars at an issue is not necessarily helpful. It may in fact be throwing dollars in the wrong direction. As you were speaking, I was mindful of the government's repeal of the Advocacy Act and commission as a case in point, for example, where, if it had continued, at least \$18 million a year would have been spent to support a professional caregiving advocate and adviser system. In the deputations that the government heard, many people came forward and said they wanted support for caregiving by families and friends and volunteers and community agencies and so forth, and part of the thrust of your presentation seems to corroborate that; that there is a way to enhance the volunteer sector, to enhance the family sector particularly. You were at great pains about that, and I hope I heard you correctly in that regard because that's where our initiative for vulnerable adults has moved with almost \$3 million. So I hope that was in fact what I was hearing.

Mr Churchman: Yes.

Mr Shea: Good. Thank you.

**Mr Kennedy:** Thank you for your presentation. There are some specific questions that it brings to the surface. One is, you are in the institutional sector, by and large — is that correct? — in terms of providing residential services?

**Mr Churchman:** In the communities. We have what would have been termed group homes in the number of about 70. The rest are apartments, family units, boarding

situations and so on.

**Mr Kennedy:** If I understand the gist of your presentation, you're fairly critical of that sector. You think there's room for group homes and community care to provide some better efficiencies?

Mr Churchman: Yes, absolutely.

Mr Kennedy: Including your own agency.

Mr Churchman: Yes.

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Mr Kennedy: We've heard from families here and outside of these hearings who are trying to sustain children at home, and particularly from what seems to be a demographic bulge of families who are facing their own mortality and their own limitations. They're finding that they're facing those limitations without government help, and in some cases, in some regions certainly, and there is dispute but I think it has become clear overall, a lessening of that support.

Is part of your presentation here today to say that there should be some onus put on organizations like yours — because you did say your organization and the sector that you represent have been relatively immune from funding cuts — that cuts should be exacted from your area to

help some of these families sustain the services at home? Is that part of your advice today?

Mr Churchman: Basically what I've said is a redeployment of funds. We did a program audit through our entire agency and discovered where we could cut and we were able to make some cuts. You'll notice in my report that in the last 18 months we accepted, with fewer dollars, 55 more individuals from the community. That doesn't mean accepting them into our group homes, but we've now freed up funds so that we are able to support those families and those people in their homes or with whatever level of care that they needed, part-time. So I'm saying yes, we need to be more critical about what we're doing, that there are areas for savings. We've identified them, we've shared them with the ministry, and we've even shared the savings with the ministry.

Mr Kennedy: In terms of the situations you're familiar with, you have about 100 families now that you have outside your care but that you're supporting. Have you found that they've been affected by some of the cuts by

government in the last year?

Mr Churchman: What I am aware of in our agency is that more people have been served and no one has

been put out the other end.

**Mr Kennedy:** Are you saying that you're not aware of some of the cuts that have happened in transit and other services affecting the disabled?

Mr Churchman: We have a policy within our own agency that each one of our programs has its own transportation. We build it into our budgets and run it through. We've been able to carpool and run circuits around and carry through in those systems. We even work with Reena and the other ones, for instance, in the Toronto area so that we can coordinate those services and try to make them go further. Again, it's a redeployment.

Mr Gravelle: I have some concerns with what you're saying and I'll tell you why, because it's quite personal. I have a brother who's developmentally challenged who

lives in a group home in Thunder Bay.

Mr Churchman: That's the one region we aren't in. Mr Gravelle: Yes, I understand that. The fact is that our family and my parents are of a certain age. They're both healthy, but it concerns me because we have seen on a personal basis what some of the government cutbacks have meant in terms of the staffing and the services. We're still very, very pleased with how he's looked after but we have great fears about that.

Mr Churchman: We have reduced staffing, I should say that.

Mr Gravelle: The fact is, and I will admit to a personal bias, that the concerns really are based upon the fact that we recognize that with our brother this is an environment where indeed we think that the staffing and the access to getting out and being involved in the community and doing some work as well are threatened by this. I certainly appreciate what you're suggesting, and I think it's a balance, but I don't think it can be forgotten that there just simply are some environments where indeed the person will not be in an situations where they can be back home and are in an environment in which they are prospering, as I believe my brother is.

You more or less seem to be suggesting that we should be redeploying. I think in some cases you may be right, but you may not always be right, and that's what I would want to be very careful about. Even in terms of the staff salaries, it's much like what's happening in terms of child care. It's sort of like you're defining that some people can be paid less to look after our children or to look after our family members, and that concerns me as well. I just wanted to express that.

Mr Churchman: I think that's fair. It isn't always the government's load. Christian Horizons and other agencies that we are uniting with will go into the faith community. We will also draw upon that resource. Sometimes with the volunteer help, the long-term help, the transportation help and so on, it's also a case of mobilizing what is available for us, and we've been working very hard in

doing that.

**Mr Kennedy:** What percentage of private funding do you have in your agency currently from faith communities and the public at large?

Mr Churchman: One million dollars. Mr Kennedy: So one thirtieth?

Mr Churchman: About that much.

The Chair: Mr Churchman, thank you kindly for coming this afternoon and sharing your thoughts and views with us. We appreciate it very much.

#### RENE PHELPS

The Chair: We have Mrs Rene Phelps. Welcome and please proceed.

Mrs Rene Phelps: Thank you. I'm here today as a parent of a son with a developmental disability and will share with you what the impact of funding cuts to developmental services has meant to our family.

My oldest son, Jonathan, is 20 years old. I also have a 17-year-old son and a six-year-old daughter. At the age of four, Jonathan was diagnosed with autism and to this day Jonathan is an active, non-verbal young man who requires 24-hour supervision. Jonathan has lived at home with us all of his life, and when I look back, I attribute the support I received from Durham family respite and through special services at home as enabling our family to stay together.

Jonathan has been a valued and participating member of our family. Unfortunately, that is not the case for most families who have a child with autism. It is with sadness that I tell you that out of all the young people with autism I have met, either through school or other programs, Jonathan and one other young lady are the only ones who are still living at home. The tremendous battles families go through to get very minimal funding and supports become too much to bear and families are literally forced to give up and say, "I can't do this any more."

While our family has managed to have the necessary supports all these years, now, thanks to the direction taken by this government, my son and our family are quickly moving to becoming yet another statistic. Since our support through family respite and special services has been cut, I'd like to share with you what a day in our life has looked like over the past six months. Before I do, I want you to know this is very difficult for me, as I

value my privacy and do not share this information

Walking into our kitchen, you will see the desk lying on its side. The shelf that once held plates is on the floor. In the family room the television sits on the floor. Every picture and mirror is off the wall. Going upstairs to Jonathan's room, you will notice that there are holes in the wall by his bed where he has banged his head. His bookshelf sits on the floor, the dresser is knocked over and the drawers are falling out. If any of these items is put back into place, it is only a matter of time before Jonathan puts things the same way again, so to save ourselves the ongoing stress, we leave things as they are.

If you come on a Monday or Friday, you will notice that Jonathan is very happy. On these two mornings, he goes to work. My friend runs a laundry service, and thanks to a small amount of funding our local autism chapter was able to receive, Jonathan has learned over the past three years basic skills such as taking towels out of the dryer, folding them, carrying the bags to the van and assisting in the deliveries. He is not the same young man at his place of work. He has never shown any damaging or self-abusive behaviour there. At one o'clock Jonathan comes home and stays there for the rest of the day.

If you come to our house on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, you will notice that Jonathan brings me the jeans that he wears to work. Since he is non-verbal, I know he is saying to me, "Mom, am I going to work today?" I have to answer, "No Jonathan, I'm sorry, no work today." This breaks my heart because although I have 20 hours of special services at home funding which I would gladly use for this purpose, I'm not allowed to, given the restrictions on the program. I use my 20 hours of SSAH through the rest of the week, so that Jonathan can participate in some community activities. He is able to go swimming, but because of his anxiety and behaviour, he is very limited as to where he can go right now.

On a weekend, if you come to our house, you will notice that my husband is not around. A month ago he was diagnosed with progressive heart disease and will require a bypass. The level of stress that we are living under could literally kill him, so under doctor's orders he cannot help out the same way as he has done before.

I submitted an individualized funding proposal to the ministry last September and to date have not had so much as the courtesy of a reply. The total request I'm making is \$55,000, which would allow Jonathan to have a full-time work program and to live in an apartment with support. We as a family would contribute and continue to be involved. If Jonathan were in a group home, I have been around the system long enough to know that with his presenting behaviours he would require a one-to-one support staff, in addition to current staffing. My guess is this cost would be close to \$90,000 per year.

My respite worker found a family that was interested in having Jonathan visit with them on weekends but as of yesterday I was told yesterday that since he knocked over and broke some dishes, including breaking the lady's glasses, he was not able to go back. They just couldn't

Jonathan has been out of school for the past three years and over this period of time we've been able to

piece together enough support and funding to manage a support system that worked. In order to do this we had to apply to a number of small pots of money, all of which were designated as "one-time dollars." The endless requirement to bare your soul and prove how desperate you are has a very damaging effect on you. You're constantly being reminded that every dollar must go to those most in need and that other families will do without if you succeed in getting what you need. I find this totally insulting, as we, among thousands of families across the province, have done our share and made our contribution willingly because of the love we have for our children.

#### 1640

As a result of funding cuts to service providers in our area, and thanks to the decision to support more families for the same amount of funding through SSAH, my total support hours have been cut in half. As I mentioned to you earlier, we now have only 20 hours per week and our respite has been reduced to one weekend per month. This has resulted in Jon's daily routine being disrupted, the community involvement disappearing, and he spends many hours at home doing nothing.

I attribute his behaviour and his anxiety to the change in his routine and the meaninglessness of his life. If it were not for my job allowing me to work from home, I would be unemployed. As it is, my job is in jeopardy due

to my own exhaustion and stress level.

For those who know me, I am called a strong and knowledgeable parent. I've sat with many families, advocating on their behalf. My involvement in the community spans almost 20 years, where, based on my own personal situation, I've been a strong voice for families at board tables, school systems and with the ministry. My ability to do any of those things any more is quickly eroding. My husband and I are soon reaching the point where we cannot cope with the growing challenge Jonathan is presenting. We are a family on the edge of crisis, hanging on for dear life.

While I'm not here today representing Family Alliance Ontario, I am a board member, and my story represents the everyday lives of hundreds of other families. So often I hear families say, "It is not our children who are the burden; it is the nightmare of bureaucracy, the hoops, the incredible energy it takes to get even a little bit of crucial support." For many it becomes just too much to bear. When also dealing with the day-to-day demands of special needs, families are literally beaten to the ground before they succumb to the bureaucratic maze and say, "I

just can't do this any more."

With the pitting of family against family, as we are told, if you get what you are asking for, some other family will have to do without, knowing full well that we as families are the first to want to come to the aid of

another family.

While I have the opportunity, I want to tell you that for years families have been penalized for keeping their children at home. Agencies that provide group homes have any number of funding mechanisms to obtain ramps and other equipment to support the needs of people. Foster families are given weekends, extra support and equipment to meet any of the needs the children they are

caring for. Yet we, his natural family, who have chosen and want to support our children have access to minimal supports, and we must beg for those; and now we are asked to do with less when we didn't have enough in the first place.

We have asked the question to this day, "Where is the equity, the fairness, the common sense?" The funding structure and policies both being implemented and proposed by this government leave families like mine with nowhere to turn. The cuts to developmental services will promote tragedy: annual applications to special services at home asking for very minimal support; the endless requirement to portray our situations as the most in need, the most desperate, otherwise we will lose what little we already have; the pitting of family against family and service providers as we vie for the crumbs thrown our way. We are well aware of the desperation of families when put up against the wall. By cutting supports to people and families, this will result in disaster. We have already seen that happen.

We hear much talk about equity. I would like to ask you today, where is the equity now where people are fully funded in institutional settings while the rest of us are basically thrown scraps, unable to plan for our lives, always being told, "Yes, this is your funding for this year but we can't promise anything for next year"? We as families are put in a constant state of anxiety. Why are families who want to have their children with them, plan for them, be involved with them penalized and forced into expensive institutional care simply because the system beats us down? We become so exhausted that we

have no choice but to completely give up.

Would any of you accept this kind of life? I doubt it, yet hundreds of families are living this, day in and day out. Those of you here today have the opportunity to make changes. You can create a mechanism that invests in family, a mechanism that gives people the support they need to become contributing members of society, to prevent crisis and to avert a potential tragedy.

As I said to you earlier, I am a very private person and I try my best to deal with my own problems on my own. I have opened up my life to you today and shared very personal information only because it is my strong hope that you here today, on behalf of thousands of families in this province, ask the current government two questions: First, where did the \$50.4 million go that has disappeared from the developmental services budget? Most important, please ask on our behalf that basic and acceptable levels of support are made available to our most vulnerable members of society.

I will leave you with this final thought: Had we chosen to institutionalize our son at the time he was diagnosed, the cost to the taxpayer over a 20-year span would have been in excess of \$1 million, not to mention the devastating effects of separation for Jonathan and our family. The cost of supporting Jonathan at home for the past 20 years is about \$300,000.

You have the opportunity to make a difference and we are counting on you.

Mr Carroll: Thank you, Mrs Phelps. I've had an opportunity to discuss a situation very similar to yours with some people in my riding, two or three different

families in my riding. I don't have any magic answers and none of us has any magic answers.

We are faced with the dilemma of being involved in a province that has for several years spent dramatically more money than it can afford to spend and we have to deal with that. Has there ever been enough money in the system to provide adequate services for your son, in your

Mrs Phelps: Up until the last few years the funding we received through special services at home, the support we received through family respite, was about double what we are getting now. We managed fine with that. With the cutbacks, with what's happening now with the stretching of the dollars to meet more people's needs, I'm at the point where I can't do it any more.

I'm saying I'm willing to make the investment in my family, but I can't do it without a decent, livable amount of support. I believe it's not a case of enough money; I think it's a case of priorities. I think we have to determine what the priorities are and the fact that, when you're looking at the most vulnerable citizens of our society, there's an obligation here. As taxpayers, I don't believe people want to see the citizens who are most vulnerable being put in these situations.

Mr Carroll: I agree with you and we certainly don't want to see that. You talked about what you see as unfair treatment of people who are being maintained at home, as opposed to people who are living in institutions.

Mrs Phelps: I'm calling it inequitable.

Mr Carroll: Yes, and as you know, we are moving in the direction of downsizing and closing some institutional care. That cannot happen overnight. We can't close them all down and find placements in the community for those residents. That is a gradual process. We have made a decision, an announcement in January of this year, that we are going to invest another \$15 million in community services, a very small amount of money in the overall picture; \$5 million of that will be for extra, special services at home. We've also made a commitment in the next four years to take \$60 million that would normally fund institutional care and devote it to community care.

We can't just pull a chain and solve all the problems that exist in this area. We have a waiting list of 1,000 people for special services at home and we are serving 20% more people than we did three years ago; mind you, with more money, but still, the pie is cut up into more pieces.

The only thing I can undertake for you is that you sent a letter in September; I think you should have had some sort of a response to that and in my new job I will see that you get a response. I'm not so sure what that response will be, but I will see that you get a response to that.

I appreciate how difficult it's been for you to come and talk to us. We appreciate your input, and please understand that we empathize with you. We are working and trying to make it better for everybody, but we don't have an answer that we can put in place tomorrow. 1650

Mr Gravelle: Good afternoon, Mrs Phelps, and thank you very much for coming. Obviously, it is difficult for you and I appreciate it. We actually had a presentation yesterday by someone from Thunder Bay which is very similar in terms of the frustrations.

With all due respect to Mr Carroll, I do think, and I think you stated in your presentation, that we have got the opportunity and the mechanism by which we can make recommendations, based on the presentations we have here, to change things. It's become very clear too that rather than just sort of talking about some of the funding you're putting into it, the special services at home program is one that has absolutely worked.

When you were asked whether anything was enough, you mentioned that when you were receiving the appropriate level of funding for special services at home you could manage. I guess one thing you are saying to us is if indeed that program could meet your needs, as it did, it would be easier for you to cope. Is that not the case?

Mrs Phelps: Absolutely, and I'd like to say at this point that \$5 million may seem, in some people's opinion, a fair amount of money, but when you translate that down into 12 area offices, our local area office will receive only \$240,000, which is a fraction of what's needed in this province.

Mr Gravelle: I recognize that the same situation exists in Thunder Bay as well, and the need continues to increase. I am sure the government will tell you they've put \$5 million more into the program, to special services at home, but I think even the Premier himself had called on the government previously to double the amount of special services at home money needed. If this will solve the problem — I shouldn't say "solve the problem" — if this will allow you to manage in a way that enables you to maintain a quality of life, as well as Jonathan's, that's hopefully something we can come to in terms of recommendations.

It's clear that this program truly works and by simply cutting the program, as has been done — I know that in Thunder Bay, they insisted it wasn't cut. They just say -

Mrs Phelps: Add more families.

Mr Gravelle: Precisely, and that will continue to happen. It's a question of what really the government's

commitment is to the program.

Mrs Phelps: The other question is, where did the money go that was already take out of developmental services over the years? To be given back \$15 million out of \$50 million I think leaves some questions to be asked. Basically, that's what we'd like to have some answers to at some point.

Mr Gravelle: You're quite right.

Mr Kennedy: I just want to reaffirm that we will ask those questions. What you're doing and obviously have done in other capacities as a board member, we will take up that challenge. You're doing a favour for the community as well as for your own family in terms of the work you've done. I don't want you to leave here not believing that message has been received.

We heard information yesterday that \$85,000 is a rough average figure for the institutionalization costs, that some of the new money that's been announced comes in at a much lower cost. Some of the regional funds that came out were as low as \$35,000. We will not, as an opposition, see this government save money on the backs of that kind of transfer. The institutional dollars need to

translate into transitional dollars and into supportive home care dollars.

Mrs Phelps: Those dollars need to be reinvested in families.

Mr Kennedy: Absolutely. The one thing — I am summarizing and if there's anything else that you can elaborate on — is the idea that there is a challenge here that has to be met, because the families can only bear this as children grow and needs change and so on. That's a demographic thing; it's not something you can manage or wish away in the absence of a government commitment. We have to meet that challenge somehow.

Mrs Phelps: Absolutely.

Mr Cooke: Thank you for your presentation. When somebody comes before us and tells us their story in that kind of detail, even though it's difficult for you to do, it helps us understand better what needs to change, what's working and what's not working.

I've certainly had lots of cases in my own constituency, in my own region, over the years that are very similar. I must say one of the most frustrating things I've ever experienced was, and I'm not sure whether it's exactly the same now, the six-month reapplication. If there was anything we could recommend out of this committee for the special services at home program — I'm sure there are some cases where the six-month reapplication is appropriate, but in the cases I've dealt with over the years, all it is is a lot of extra work for the family —

Mrs Phelps: It's a lot of bureaucracy.

Mr Cooke: — a lot of fear for the family and, you're right, a lot of bureaucracy. There are people in the Ministry of Community and Social Services who are sitting down and reviewing those every six months when there is no change in the family.

Mrs Phelps: Autism doesn't go away.

Mr Cooke: Right. If there were anything we could recommend about trying to streamline that, that would be of some assistance. It wouldn't cost; it would probably save some money within the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

The other thing I wondered, on your specific case — I've dealt with families that have autistic children as well. Part of my understanding of this is that it's absolutely essential that whatever is provided, programs at home and programs in the community, there's got to be consistency because with change the child will regress.

Mrs Phelps: Absolutely.

Mr Cooke: Is that one of the problems when your son can't go to work? If he could go to work more regularly —

Mrs Phelps: He was in a routine. He knew what to expect every day. He enjoyed it, he was productive, he was doing something useful and he recognized that. When that had to be cut back, he ended up sitting at home. If any one of us were put in that same position, and you add to that the inability to deal with change — I mean, our house is like a war zone. We've never had that. This is the first time we've ever had to deal with this, and let me tell you it's literally impossible to do over a sustained period of time.

Mr Cooke: The final question I have is partly rhetorical, but I'm sure you will have an opinion on it. When

Mr Carroll mentioned a few minutes ago that part of the problem is that there's just too much debt, do you think your family and your neighbours would prefer to have a tax reduction that's going to cost \$5 billion a year or have some of that money reinvested in kids?

Mrs Phelps: I believe the community wants reinvestment in families, in children, because they are our future. By investing in families now, we avert the kinds of situations that cost the taxpayers of Ontario a fortune, not only in dollars but in terms of society and in terms of outcomes and the kinds of values we see that we all want for ourselves, our families and our communities.

Mr Cooke: Just think what we could do for kids in

this province if we had that \$5 billion.

Mrs Phelps: Absolutely.

The Chair: Mrs Phelps, thank you very kindly for your presentation and taking the time to put this down.

### METRO AGENCIES REPRESENTATIVES' COUNCIL

The Chair: Next we have the Metro Agencies Representatives' Council. Gentlemen, welcome this afternoon.

You have half an hour. Please proceed.

Mr Glenn Archinoff: Good afternoon and thank you for inviting us here today. My name is Glenn Archinoff. I'm the vice-chair of the MARC council of boards, and this is Jim Johnston, who is a member of the council of boards. We want to start by giving you a very brief description of what MARC is, then we'll introduce ourselves a little bit and then we'll talk about the impact of budget cuts.

MARC is an association of 52 transfer payment agencies in the Metro Toronto area which provide services to individuals who are developmentally handicapped. These services include residential care, day programs, vocational training, recreational programs and other services designed to allow these individuals to live meaningful lives in the community.

MARC itself is simply a coming together of the agencies in the DH, or developmentally handicapped sector in Metro, so MARC itself does not provide direct services. Membership in MARC is voluntary, and MARC exists really only to help the individual agencies improve the availability, efficiency and effectiveness of their services, and to advocate on behalf of people with developmental disabilities and their families.

MARC doesn't receive any government funding, and we have just one staff person. Our council of boards consists of board members of MARC agencies who are community volunteers. We also have an administrators council, which consists of executive directors of member agencies.

1700

MARC agencies serve about 5,000 developmentally handicapped individuals with a wide range of disabilities. Some are mildly handicapped and require little support to live in the community; others are more severely handicapped, with complex physical and mental health needs, and require 24-hours-a-day care.

Neither Jim nor I actually work in the DH sector, nor are we academic experts on the subject. Jim is a manager at IBM and I'm an independent nuclear safety consultant,

but we come before you today with what we think is a lot of knowledge of and interest in the DH sector. We both have developmentally handicapped children, but also we've both spent thousands of hours working voluntarily on behalf of people with developmental disabilities. We're just your typical, hardworking Ontarians who happen to have a particular interest in people with developmental disabilities.

We've been asked to comment on the impact of the government's funding cuts on people with disabilities and their families. We're going to focus on the impact of cuts on people with developmental disabilities. Through our presentation today we hope to make three specific points.

The first point is that the DH sector was not in good shape even at the start of this government's mandate. There were many developmentally handicapped people who received no services at all and many who received inadequate service.

The second point is that government cuts have reduced the quality of service to those people who do receive services and have made the situation virtually hopeless

for those who desperately need services.

The third point is that there is a determination within the DH sector, by community volunteers like ourselves and many others and by service providers, to make the system work better even with diminishing resources so that the unfairness and injustice are rectified at least to the extent that we can do it.

Our view is that the government, particularly the Ministry of Community and Social Services, has yet to recognize this determination, but it must do so and it must facilitate it. Currently we feel that the government, through the ministry, views the sector as an adversary

rather than an ally and a partner.

Mr Jim Johnston: In case you think I'm wearing my best suit just because I'm coming to give this presentation, I should say that I have two developmentally handicapped adult children. My wife has faithfully volunteered with them at Scarborough Grace Hospital every Thursday for the past five years, and the Optimist Club is kindly honouring them for their efforts in that volunteer work. We're extremely proud of both of them, and I actually wore my suit because I have to go there from here.

**Mr Cooke:** I'm just concerned about the dominance of blue in both.

Mr Johnston: I'm sorry, I'm from IBM.

We believe that "a fair society protects the interests and autonomy of vulnerable people and treats them with dignity. This must be done without unduly burdening service providers and families, or creating a costly, complex bureaucracy." We know that this government believes this, since I'm quoting from the speech from the throne. Let me just say it again. We believe that "a fair society protects the interests and autonomy of vulnerable people and treats them with dignity. This must be done without unduly burdening service providers and families, or creating a costly, complex bureaucracy."

What, then, is the issue? If we really protected the interests of people with developmental handicaps without unduly burdening families, we wouldn't be here, but that's not reality. The issue is that even before govern-

ment spending cuts, many developmentally handicapped individuals and their families were suffering. The government's own figures show that there are approximately 110,000 people in the province with developmental handicaps and that only 50,000 of these receive any specialized services. The majority of them cannot get the services they need.

Currently in Metro there are 1,400 people waiting for residential support and over 1,100 waiting for day programs, and of these people, about 25% are over the age of 35. We're not protecting their interests and we're not treating them with dignity. You politicians don't hear from them because most are unable to speak on their own behalf; that's why we're here. They are not a special interest group. Most don't vote. They don't curry favour. They don't rub shoulders with the rich and powerful. They and their families are simply trying to get the support they need to make their lives livable in their communities in Ontario.

Why do I say these families suffer? You've heard a bit of this, as I understand, before. Caring for a developmentally handicapped son or daughter is a relentless, difficult and stressful task. For example, I have a 73-yearold friend who has a developmentally handicapped son. For 36 years his son has lived at home. He has no services. In the past few years, since his wife passed away, his son has had increasingly severe mental health problems. He has to clean up when his son defecates and soils articles all around the home. He showers him; he shaves him; he cleans up when he throws food around the house; he tries to ensure that his son eats well; he worries when he wanders and he can't find him. My friend is tired, he's stressed and he's losing hope. He's looking for support and he's frightened about what will happen when he dies and there is no one to help his son. In fact, we're all are frightened about what happens when we die and there's no one there to help our son or daughter.

What are we telling him and others like him who are coming here asking for help? "The waiting lists are too long. The government has other priorities. The budget has to be balanced. Repatriating those from the institutions is taking all our energy and money." This man and his wife, who sacrificed rather than send their child to an institution and, by the way, saving the government, if \$95,000 a year for institutional care is correct, about, \$3.5 million, deserve more. Have we as a society protected his son's interests and treated him with dignity? Not if we're not willing to help, and mark my words: Our society will be judged on how we treat these vulnerable people.

Did you know that 30% of those with developmental handicaps have mental health needs, that is, are dually diagnosed? Adults living at home with no supports are very susceptible to depression and other mental health problems. I know. My daughter is 27. When she left school she had nothing. She went from a very structured life to an unstructured life. She slowly slipped into depression.

I can't describe to you the difficulties my wife and I had with that kind of depression, the kinds of symptoms — the violence, the bedwetting. The difficulties were just incredible, yet the mental health services that we went to invariably couldn't help and developmental

services didn't have the dollars to help because she was a hard-to-take-care-of person.

She ended up being hospitalized at Whitby. We ended up getting advice from people saying: "Just drop her off at Whitby. It's very difficult to get in there, but if you leave here off there, then they'll probably take her, because what else can they do? They have to take her in." My God, what kind of a system are we in when that

happens?

Did you also realize that 25% of these vulnerable individuals are sexually abused? That's a mind-boggling number, one out of four, and that's from many studies. Adequate supports for these adults and families in this situation are absolutely essential, and I know that from experience. My son is 30 years old. He was sexually abused by a neighbour and a friend — twice. He can't talk about that. He can't sit down and work out his issues like normal folk. He needs help; he needs support. He needed support from society. He needed the kind of specialized support that we know how to give, yet we don't have the dollars to give it to him. I don't want to go into that time in my life, but it was absolutely horrendous, and the difficulty is that we know how to give those supports and we're not.

By no means was the situation okay when the government took office. I know the developmentally handicapped services sector grew significantly in the 1980s and early 1990s, as thousands of individuals were brought back to communities from institutions. New agencies were spawned and existing budgets increased as community agencies started providing services to these individuals, and ves, it sometimes costs even more money for these individuals to live in the community than to live in an institution. For example, Glenn was told by a ministry rep that it would cost more for his daughter, with her high medical needs, to live in the community rather than in the institution she was in, and this prediction was correct. But living in the community is better for most of these individuals, and I don't think anybody should apologize for the fact that sometimes it costs money to provide basic services to allow people to live in the community.

Against this backdrop of a system struggling to cope with increasing demands from both repatriation from institutions and an aging population — by the way, there are days when I really put myself in this category — trying to cope with adult developmentally handicapped children living at home, the government cut budgets directly by 5% almost immediately after taking office and these cutbacks hurt those at home the most. They eliminated the chance for them to receive support from community agencies. They heightened the despair of families who are already frightened about what will happen as they get too old to care for their children.

This is not a population that you can count on neighbours or churches to care for. Many of them need specialized services. Only government-supported programs can provide this. Recent announcements of \$15 million added to the sector from savings due to institution closures have not brought funding for this sector back to where is was two years ago, and here we're only talking about direct funding cuts.

Cutbacks to other government services, such as health, education and transportation, actually have a greater impact on those with disabilities than on others. For example, removing supports that children with developmental disabilities need, such as behaviour therapists, speech-language pathologists or teachers' aides, makes it less likely that they will have a reasonable quality of life they deserve and makes it likely that in the end they'll actually need more supports in their adult life. It certainly makes it harder for these children to be educated in the public school system.

1710

Cutting transportation for the handicapped means they can't get to community programs, and you've heard what happens when developmentally handicapped children have to stay at home. These indirect cuts have only exacerbated an already bad situation where the developmentally handicapped were already receiving inadequate support in areas which come under the responsibility of other ministries. Problems in the areas of physical and mental health, education, transportation, housing and recreation, among others, are well known and have only been made worse by the new cuts.

The cuts have also added to the stress that community agencies are already under. Developmentally handicapped individuals are living longer, thank God. More of them in care are suffering from the illnesses of old age, including Alzheimer disease. Budget cuts mean that individuals already in service receive less support and make it impossible for these agencies to reach out to people in

the community.

We should not forget that apart from cuts, most budgets have been frozen for several years, and the cumulative effect of inflation, although it's low, is like an additional budget cut. So the recent direct budget cuts, even though they are small in comparison to cuts in other areas, combined with the effects of indirect cuts and the eroding effects of inflation, are like the straw that broke the camel's back. There is less funding to do more work for more individuals with complex needs, and people who currently receive no services or inadequate services are left in the lurch.

Even though there is less money available, we can make improvements. We know from doing a lot of consultation with families that they don't want a lot. They want access to information; they want a single point of contact to help them navigate the system; they want parental relief when they need it; they want some meaningful things to do for their developmentally handicapped child; and they want assurances that their children will be looked after when they no longer can. We need to give families control. We can do this by providing them with the money, directly or indirectly, and by giving them the power to choose their services and the help, if they need it, to choose wisely.

Mr Archinoff: As an organization, MARC recognizes that this government was elected with a certain mandate, and we have been operating under the premise that we would need to work with the Ministry of Community and Social Services to make the system better and correct the unfairness and injustice. We feel, however, that the ministry is so focused on cost cutting that it does not see

that there are ways to make improvements, even in the current fiscal climate. I want to give you a couple of examples.

MÂRC had proposed to develop an information system that would allow families with developmentally handicapped children, and any professionals who provide services to people with developmental disabilities, access to information on how they could obtain services, where they could go to get services and what types of services are available, and the government agreed to fund this proposal over a three-year period.

It's noteworthy that we had proposed that this information system be self-funding after that initial time so it wouldn't require an ongoing commitment of funds from the government. We actually got to the point of buying some computer hardware for the system, when the funding was pulled. The reason given was that the sector was undergoing restructuring, so there wasn't any point in building an information system if the structure of the

sector was going to change.

Obviously the system was going to be flexible enough to adapt to any change like that, but the point of the story is that, as Jim has said, we have recently undertaken a massive consultation related to another initiative that I'm going to talk about in a minute, and we keep hearing over and over again directly from families that it would really help them if they could get access to information and that they just can't get it right now. If our proposal had not been cut, the information system would be well on its way to being available. This is just one example where, at least in our view, cost cutting is taking precedence over wise decision-making.

The other initiative I was referring to is a restructuring of the sector in the Metro area to do more for more people and with less money. We, being MARC, made a proposal to the ministry to cofund this project but we were turned down because, we were told, the ministry does not pay for planning. When we launched our initiative, we were aware that the ministry was also planning a restructuring exercise that was supposed to start last fall and be finished this spring, I think sometime around March. As far as we know, that exercise hasn't started yet.

In the meantime, we obtained a grant from the Trillium Foundation and we are about two thirds of the way through our project. What's distressing about this story is that we were told directly by senior ministry staff that MARC agencies couldn't really be trusted to make and implement some of the hard decisions that were necessary. That was based on this person's past experience. What the ministry didn't recognize, however, was that MARC had restructured itself so that our cooperative planning process would improve.

The initiatives I've been talking about are driven by community people, lay people, like Jim and myself and many others, who are volunteer board members of MARC agencies. These are people from all walks of life and from across the political spectrum. They will make the hard recommendations, if necessary, and they're in a position, because they sit on the boards of the agencies, to see that the recommendations are carried out.

The point we'd like to make by telling you these stories is that you can't fix the sector just by cutting

budgets or moving money around. You can't fix the problems that way. There are many dedicated volunteers and staff of service providers out there who have tremendous knowledge and are willing to put it to work to improve the system. More important, there are families out there who tell us they have been saying for years what needs to be done to fix the system, but nobody actually does it, and they're getting kind of tired of saying the same things over and over again.

We need to tailor services to the individual. This means changing the way we think about delivering services, and this change in thinking has to start with the ministry. Right now, our perception is that they view themselves as controllers and gatekeepers instead of facilitators. The ministry should be at the bottom of the organization chart of service delivery, providing the foundation for everything above, and leading to the developmentally handicapped individual and their family at the top. Right now, the ministry thinks it's at the top and everyone else reports to it. We must correct this perception and get the ministry truly working with the community to solve these problems.

By the way, we don't think the minister's advisory council is serving this purpose. We sit on it and we know it's not really meaningful consultation. But we have seen a glimmer of hope. Recently, some ministry staff, particularly those who are working closely with the agencies, have shown a change in attitude by truly working with the sector. This is a positive change that must percolate throughout the rest of the ministry.

We want to conclude by saying that the situation is dire, as you've heard from us and I think many others, but it's not hopeless. If some serious changes do not occur, and soon, we will all be reading about more and more tragic situations involving the developmentally handicapped. Our goal should be not only to prevent these, but also to see that all people with developmental handicaps never even get close to such situations.

We feel this is a pressing societal issue. We cannot allow families to break up, as they do now, from lack of support of their handicapped children. We cannot shut our eyes to the suffering of these individuals. We can't wait for family crises before we act, because this only increases the support we must give in the future. Fiscal responsibility and humanity both demand that we all support these individuals now so that they can live with dignity in our communities. They deserve no less.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We have about three and a half minutes per party.

Mr Kennedy: Thank you for your presentation. I'd like to get a little elaboration on what you characterize as the adversarial relationship with the ministry. I'm just wondering how that affects the ministry's decisions in terms of the cuts or the allocations of scarce dollars. Have the MARC agencies found themselves in a disadvantaged position in working with the ministry as a result?

Mr Archinoff: We don't really know very much about how the ministry makes its decisions. We attend these advisory council meetings, and let me just give you an example of the way it works. If, for example, you were on the advisory council and were attending these meet-

ings, each of these handouts we gave you today would be numbered and we would collect them all at the end so you couldn't take copies with you. Would you feel you had been treated as a partner in the process? I don't think so. We also are provided with briefing notes after the sessions. The sessions last a day and we get maybe a page or two of very terse notes that are in fact inaccurate.

We go to these meetings, then a couple of months go by and we go to another meeting. Nothing much seems to have changed. As I said, we don't really understand

the process.

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**Mr Kennedy:** In terms of some of the specifics of the risks you've identified, do you have an idea of how many, for example, age-risk families are out there, where the care provider in the household is finding it extremely difficult and is on part of these waiting lists you've described to us?

**Mr Archinoff:** A subcommittee of MARC has just been looking into this, and they've identified 200 families, I believe, in that category who are clearly at risk

right now in Metro.

**Mr Kennedy:** Quantification is not the only goal or even the primary goal, but we're trying to get a sense that when there are shifts and delays and inadequate responses, there are consequences. You mentioned breakdowns of families who had to make the choice or felt compelled not to sustain the environment they've been able to provide. Any idea of numbers, incidents that have happened, particularly in the past year?

Mr Johnston: I don't have numbers, but when you deal with parents you see a lot of single moms where the father has left because the father can't take the strain and the mother is now trying to deal with the developmentally handicapped son or daughter by themselves. It's more anecdotal and it's more from personal experience, seeing families broken down, but I don't have any numbers for

you.

**Mr Kennedy:** You touched on a number of things, but is there a primary recommendation you have in terms of how to change the conditions you've described that have prevailed over the past year? Would it be the ministry change you mentioned at the end, or is it the dollars themselves that have to be the primary focus?

Mr Johnston: I really think there are two main things. One is that we have to give families some control over their lives. As you've heard before, if you cut their special services at home or if you cut their ability to take care of their child or cut their ability to get their children into some sort of care, they're going to crumble. We have to focus on the family and say, "What does the family need?"

The other part, which is more the MARC part that we're talking about, is that in our mind the government has to look at the agencies and work closely with them. We're coming up with ideas; we're thinking of ways we can do things better in Metro, the collection of 52 agencies we represent. We have to have some meaningful discussion about how that would work and have the ministry really listen to the ideas and recommendations we come up with, as opposed to simply following its own agenda.

Mr Cooke: Thank you for the presentation. There are so many things we could talk about. I must say, in my own constituency it's been a growing caseload over the years of aging parents and the crises they begin to face because of difficulties their young adult is having or because of their own health, and the placements that need to be found. I think you're absolutely right that the concentration over the last considerable period of time and new resources that have been put in place have been for deinstitutionalization. It's been an easy thing to try to forget about those who are already in the community and will require increasing services because parents who have taken care of them are growing old and are just not able to continue to do it. Some of the parents who have come in to see me — it's just been heartbreaking to see the fear. That reinforces the additional strain that was put in place by the 5% cut.

We can talk in our recommendations about dollars and demographics and what needs to be done, and I hope we will do that in our report to the government, but I think there's a need to talk about other things as well. When I was over in the Ministry of Education, I think we were moving in a fairly dramatic way to integration in our public school system, and that has taken a step backwards in the last couple of years because of supports and also because of some court cases that the ministry changed its position on.

You made one other point that I want to reinforce. It would be almost comical if it weren't so serious, but if you come from a community outside Metro — many years ago we went to regional offices for the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and a lot of us thought, "Now we're going to understand the decision-making process and now we're going to have people to work with in partnership," but the difficulty I've found for the last 15 years or so is that you call the local office and they say, "We've sent the decision to be made to the regional office," which for us is in London. Then you call the regional office and they say, "We faxed it to Toronto."

The biggest growth industry in the last 20 years for children's services has been on the decentralization of the ministry, and it's more confusing to me now than it was before. At least before I knew I had to call Toronto, call the head office. Now you have to call about six offices before you can find out who's making the decision and who's working on the file.

Mr Johnston: As Glenn said, parents keep telling us that they want that kind of information about where to go and how to get help. Looking at the system from our point of view, it's very confusing, and when you have huge ministries like Health and Comsoc providing service and no centralized information source for parents, they're just groping in the dark. It's very difficult for them.

Mr Cooke: There's got to be empowerment of local offices and that's who you deal with, that you don't have to keep dealing with some head office. There's got to be some empowerment to the community and at the local local

level

**Mr Carroll:** Thank you, gentlemen. The first thing I'd like to do is a quick comment about something Mr Cooke said to the previous presenter. He said this government

should look at why it didn't provide extra funding for special services at home rather than give a tax cut to the hardworking people of Ontario. He should probably dwell on the same question about why they didn't provide extra money for special services at home rather than run up \$50 billion in debt. I just wanted to make that point.

Gentlemen, I want to compliment you on the fact that you are not sitting still, that you are moving ahead in trying to do better with less. I understand you agree with the idea of individualized funding, competition among providers, profit and not-for-profit. Is that fair to say?

Mr Archinoff: Be careful. I think you're jumping ahead a little bit. We didn't say that individualized funding is the way to go or competition is the way to go. You have to give control to families. That doesn't necessarily mean you give them the money.

Mr Carroll: No, I'm not saying give them the money.

I'm just saying —

Mr Archinoff: "Individualized funding" means different things to different people, because I don't think we have a good —

Mr Čarroll: Maybe "individualized assessment" would be better rather than "funding." I understand. I think

we're on the same wavelength.

Your presentation says you represent a group of 52 transfer payment agencies serving 5,000 people. As a layman, the first question that pops into my head is, is that part of the problem? Can you comment on that, 52 transfer payment agencies servicing 5,000 people? Is that part of the problem?

Mr Archinoff: Are you saying there are too many?

What aspect are you driving at?

Mr Carroll: Could we get by with fewer transfer

payment agencies than 52 for 5,000 people?

Mr Archinoff: You're suggesting that savings could be achieved by amalgamating some agencies, that there could be some savings on administration costs? Presumably that's what you're driving at. You're not suggesting that we serve fewer people?

Mr Carroll: Oh, no. I'm not suggesting that, or I'm not suggesting cutting any services. I'm just saying that each one of those agencies has to have an organization.

Mr Archinoff: No, not necessarily. Because of the cuts that have happened already, the agencies have trimmed administration back pretty much as far as it can

One of the things we are looking at in this restructuring exercise — we don't know what's going to come out of it yet, but it may be that if certain agencies are providing basically the same services to the same type of people, maybe it doesn't make sense to amalgamate. I wouldn't preclude it. But each of those agencies grew up for a reason. Some of them are small and they serve certain types of people. If you start just throwing everybody into the same basket, you are defeating the purpose of what we're trying to do, and that's trying to meet the needs of the individual person.

Mr Carroll: Didn't you talk about one entry point,

though?

**Mr Archinoff:** No. I said access to information, a single point of contact to get information. That doesn't mean a single entry point who assesses everybody. Again, don't throw everybody into the same basket.

Mr Carroll: I'm not suggesting that.

Mr Archinoff: People would just like, say, a 1-800 number to phone: "This is the type of information I need. Where can I get it? These are the type of problems I'm having. Who can I speak to?"

Mr Carroll: But you don't think, necessarily, that this government funding 52 different social service agencies for 5,000 handicapped people in the city is part of the

problem? You don't think that?

Mr Johnston: Can I make one point? First of all, the 52 agencies aren't 52 agencies dedicated to servicing developmentally handicapped people. We encourage people to join MARC, such as the YMCA, who might be able to serve developmentally handicapped adults in one of their programs. That's one, and there are many other agencies like that. There is a small core of agencies that do nothing other than serve developmentally handicapped individuals, and you probably know them as well as I do. They've often grown up as a result of these religious communities or whatever being able to come together and provide these kinds of services, whether it be the Reena Foundation or others. I don't want you to think there are 52 agencies all of whom are doing this 100% of their time. It's a much smaller number that are dedicated to doing this.

We encourage people who provide any kind of service to the developmentally handicapped to belong to MARC so that together — you see, to us it's a holistic thing. It's recreational programs, it's all kinds of programs that go into enriching the life of a developmentally handicapped individual. The more we can plan for that holistically, the better off we are. We're encouraging that inclusion in MARC so we can sit at the table and debate the kinds of programs people should have. Personally, I don't think 52

is a problem.

The Chair: Mr Archinoff, last comment.

Mr Archinoff: I'm not here to defend the current structure of the sector and neither is Jim. If it makes sense and will provide better service or allow more people to receive service by amalgamating some agencies, fine, but please don't think that the answer is simply amalgamation. That would really just be the tip of the iceberg. It's a much bigger problem than that.

Mr Carroll: What we're trying to do, all of us, you and us, is to provide better services to more people with

a limited amount of resources.

Mr Archinoff: Correct.

The Chair: Gentlemen, thank you kindly for your presentation. We appreciate your taking the time. I hope everything goes well with your offspring this afternoon.

Mrs Johns: And congratulations on your award. Mr Johnston: No, no. My children's award.

## FEDERATION OF ONTARIO FACILITY LIAISON GROUPS

The Chair: We now have the Federation of Ontario Facility Liaison Groups, Mr Pavlov and Mr Paproski. Welcome to the hearings. We look forward to your presentation. Please introduce yourselves and proceed.

Mr Chris Pavlov: My name is Chris Pavlov. I'm the first vice-president of the federation. I'd like to introduce Dennis Paproski, our second vice-president, and I'd like to thank the committee for this opportunity to be here today.

Because the federation is essentially an umbrella group of many smaller parent and family organizations of regional centres in Ontario, I'd like to quickly introduce the people who are here. From Huronia Helpers, Huronia Regional Centre, we have Mrs Joan Rowe-Sleeman and Ms Janet Allingham; from the Family and Friends of Edgar Adult Occupational Centre, we have Mr John Greenland and Mr Ken Parilyn; from the Families' Association of Midwestern Regional Centre, we have Mr Graydon Hulse; from Macaulay Mountain Community Association, Prince Edward Heights Regional Centre, we have Mrs Deborah Burns, Mr Don Dano, Mrs Dano and Reverend R. James; and from Oaklands Family Association, we have Mrs Margaret Gorman and Mrs Kit Nero.

Since your time is precious, we will try to be as focused and as explicit as possible in our presentation. As I mentioned, we are an umbrella group and represent the views of many family organizations.

The primary focus of our presence here today is to underline the critical need for comprehensive facility care for people with developmental disabilities throughout Ontario. We feel such facilities must continue to be one of the options along a continuum of supports and services required to serve the preferences, needs and abilities of persons with developmental disabilities. These disabilities can range from a mild affliction to a profound handicap.

The federation supports the comprehensive congregate care option for those people who have severe to profound disabilities and for those who choose this option. These individuals often require a structured environment where services are consistent and accessible. These could be, for example, medical, dental, educational, social, hygienic, dietary. Encompassing those areas is a 24-hour-care priority, as well as fitness and kinesiology.

While we applaud the move towards integration — and I must emphasize that we do applaud the move towards integration for the children and adults who are capable of adapting to those situations, a more integrated community living, as it's known in this day and age — we feel the purpose that brought about the congregate care facilities such as Huronia, such as Edgar, still exists. The purpose for the creation of those centres still exists, and that is to provide an environment that best meets the needs of the developmentally handicapped, an environment in which the individual can effectively assimilate and deal with his or her surroundings without feeling overwhelmed, threatened or inadequate.

Much of the disdain about facilities comes from the word "institution." We like to use the words "congregate care facility" or just "facility." It's not a word that I would associate with many of the facilities that are currently in Ontario right now. They're based on a homelike environment. They have changed greatly over the years. The number of residents per residential unit is similar to a large family. Services are accessible and onsite. These specialized communities — really, in many ways we feel that they are communities in every

respect — provide abundant time for interaction with friends, with peers, with staff, with the surrounding community, and most importantly with family. Family is very accessible to these centres. The perception that they're locked away is just not true.

That gives you kind of a focus of the heart of our organization. I'll now turn it over to Dennis for some

more specifics.

Mr Dennis Paproski: Unfortunately for you, I'm not going to read anything. You'll have the papers to take with you. There's an executive summary on the first page for those of you who are too busy to read the other 10. But I'd like to address the subject of the impact of the Conservative government's funding and funding cuts on persons with developmental disabilities and their families as it relates to persons living in facilities and to those now living in the so-called community, those served or not served, as the case may be, by volunteer-led social service delivery agencies. You can't separate the two.

In relation to facility living, the current government's announcements respecting closure and downsizing are not part of a new policy. They are part of a multi-year plan that was launched in 1982 based on the conventional wisdom of the 1970s. We have several studies that have evaluated the impact of that plan and its implementation over the first 10 years of that plan. We'll come back to looking at those objective evaluations in just a minute.

We're now talking about the residual population at the facilities. The first five years called for 1,000 people to be moved out into the community, the 1,000 least handicapped people. The second five-year plan did the same thing. The people we have left in facilities are all adults today. They are all multiple, profoundly or severely handicapped people, so the current government's actions to close these facilities and to save money are based on some erroneous assumptions about the people who would be moved to the community and their needs in the community.

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For the community agencies — and you've heard this from the previous group but I'll just repeat our line on it — the Progressive Conservative cutbacks are a continuation of those started by the NDP. But being relatively larger and because they come following years of chiselling away at the community system, they are no longer cutting away the fat; they are striking at the vital organs of the supports and services provided by community-based agencies. To illustrate that this is the case, that things are getting worse and not better in the community, one only has to consult the growing waiting lists and the closures of day programs provided to people in the communities who are lucky enough to get into any programs at all.

The assumptions which underlie the renewed obsession with closure and downsizing of facilities are just as naïve, or perhaps cynical, as they were in the 1970s, when they were formulated. We rely on two evaluations of experience with downsizing and closure under the multi-year plan to substantiate this contention.

Harper and Baker, the first study, was written in 1986 about the first five years of the plan, and it noted the critical underlying assumptions as following:

The first is that the community is ready, willing and able to accept transfers of persons from the facilities and to provide an equal or better quality of care in the communities. Not so, say Harper and Baker — by the way, these reports were developed for MCSS itself — unless there is, up front, a huge infusion of money and skills into the communities to prepare for these people being transferred.

The second assumption is that community living is way less costly and therefore moneys can be freed up to help the community look after its waiting lists. Not so, say the authors of this report, because relatively highneeds persons from the facilities cost way more than anticipated, and one should therefore not expect there to be savings to help relieve community waiting lists.

The second evaluation, for the period 1986-91, was by Vickers, who reported in 1991 that the assumption that community based agencies have the personnel, money, skills etc to ensure maintenance of quality of life for those leaving the facilities was simply wrong. He maintained that success could only come if comprehensive supports and services and fully adequate supply were developed first. He also noted that the remaining facility populations, adults in fact, were also highly handicapped, requiring greater supports than those who were first to leave the facilities.

I guess the saddest part of all is that there is no evaluation available to the public concerning the performance of the downsizing in the third five-year period, 1991-96, just the same old rhetoric from MCSS and OACL ideology we have heard since the 1970s. But the reduced base-funding grants to the community agencies over the past five years and the growing community waiting lists suggest that things have got worse, not better, than in 1991.

Yes, community living for children who have developmental disabilities has improved over the last 10 to 12 years because the Ministry of Education, or actually the school boards, which are now being amalgamated — because of that education system accepting responsibility for the day programs of children; that is, people under 21. But facility residents are all 30 years old or older and all require very profound care.

The proof, by MCSS's own evaluation, is that the community is not able at this time to assume responsibility for highly vulnerable adults who prefer care in today's facilities. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that forcing handicapped individuals to move to inadequate community programs will save the government any money and thereby help the thousands who are already in the community and on waiting lists with no programs.

Both in the executive summary and on page 10 of our report we end up with a recommendation, and that is simply: A moratorium should be declared on closure and downsizing of facilities to permit scientific analysis and policy adjustment that will ensure that the lessons of history are applied and mistakes of the past are not repeated. Good economics, as well as compassion and, dare I say it, common sense, demands no less.

We would love to answer any questions you have or record any of your comments.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation. The NDP isn't here, so the government side can lead off. We have about seven minutes for each party.

Mr Carroll: Thank you for coming forward today. I have had the opportunity to visit, in several cases, Southwestern Regional Centre, so I understand a lot of what you say. The arguments made by the people on the other side of this story, primarily people from the Association for Community Living, are also very persuasive about why you're not right and why people should all be put into the community. Our particular program right now is that we have said we have a plan till 1999, at which time we will revisit the whole issue.

The Association for Community Living people say that every single person who is currently living in an institution can be taken care of, to their advantage, in the community. Why do they say that if that's not true?

Mr Paproski: I think there's a difference between ideology and a difference between an objective evaluation of what's going on. The obsession — I use the word purposefully — with closure is based on an image that is outdated. The contention on our part is simply that people should have a choice. The OACL ideology does not allow choice. It is their way or no way: "You will be integrated, whether you like it or not, whether you choose to or not." If somebody told you, sir, that you couldn't go into a senior citizens' residence, what would you say?

Mrs Johns: Better say you're not ready yet.

Mr Paproski: In your own good time.

Mr Carroll: I would hope so.

Mr Paproski: But the other side of the coin is that there is a fallacy that somehow or other these people can live in the community with an equal or better quality of life. I happen to also be a member of a community association board of directors and I can tell you that in Ottawa-Carleton we've been cutting back day programs for adults, that we have growing waiting lists.

I can talk on this issue from both sides. I can tell you that for my child, if she could talk, her preference and the preference of her parents would be that she live in a group home like she does at Rideau Regional Centre. It seems to me very presumptuous on the part of OACL leadership, or MCSS leadership for that matter, to tell me that they know better than I do what is good for my daughter. My daughter is a number to them. My daughter is a target of an ideology. My daughter is my daughter and I know her better than anybody. I don't presume to tell them how to run their lives and I don't expect them to tell us how to run ours.

Mr Carroll: Given the fact that we think people should have a choice, and I'm not so sure I disagree with that, could the group of institutions we talk about be a lot smaller than they are now? Southwestern Regional Centre is a 1,200-bed facility. Do we need that size of facility? Is there an option somewhere in the middle between a group home that holds four people and an institution that holds 1,200?

**Mr Paproski:** May I just make a comment? The facilities targeted for closure are the smallest ones in the system. Explain that to me. It's not Rideau Regional Centre, with 700-something, not Southwestern, with 600-something. It's the smallest ones, the ones that have

adapted to a community-like presence for their people, like Macaulay Mountain or Prince Edward Heights. These are documented in the paper we've given you.

Perhaps I'm turning the thing around and saying, what is the rationale for taking the smallest and closing them down first? The only rationale could be per diem costs. As we argue, you can't reduce the population of a facility that was designed for 600 people and blame it on the administration or whatever for the rise in average per diem costs. You've taken it from its optimum down. You've lost all the economies of scale that you designed into the system in the first place.

We're just saying, revisit before you keep on closing. Use the scientific evidence out there, use the rational approach to these things, and I think you may come

around to our way of thinking.

Mr Kennedy: Thank you for your perspective and your presentation. I'm interested in what the conditions are like generally in the institutions. Have they been affected by cuts? Also, to follow up on that, tell us a little more about what your group's and the various liaison groups' confidence in the institutions is based on. I've certainly heard the argument about the inability of communities to absorb, but I'd like to better understand what families or others interested in the wellbeing of the people affected find beneficial about the institutions.

But first of all I want to know what's happening in the institutions. Have they been subject to cutbacks? Is there apprehension on the part of the families about what is coming up or what has been done about that population?

**Mr Pavlov:** That is very much on the minds of the individual families, particularly staffing cuts. That's the one aspect we appreciate about the facility, the high ratio

of staff to residents.

But unfortunately, with cutbacks that has depleted. I don't have specific numbers at the moment, but it seems that in general the front-line workers, if you will, in direct contact with the residents are the first to be affected, before administration and support staff in the facility. That we find disturbing, because it is the front-line workers who are in direct contact with the residents and provide that one-on-one care. They're there when they get up in the morning for bathing, for meal time. That is of concern, and as we go through this exercise it will become more so.

Mr Paproski: In answer to that question, we will leave with the clerk the two reports to which I referred. She can make copies of them. There's also a report on the profile of people who might be moving from Rideau Regional to Ottawa-Carleton. It details the characteristics of the people in the facility and the requirements they would have once they got into the community. The community in Ottawa-Carleton cannot provide those supports.

You ask what's happened at the facilities. It depends a lot, of course, on the administrators; they are MCSS employees too. In some cases, some of the administrators have been able to use vacated space for social activity areas, for education centres and what have you. In other cases, more and more people have been consolidated into — dare I used the word — wards. There are all sorts of performances. They are not perfect, by any stretch of

the imagination, and nobody in our organization would say they were. I think you will find our paper balanced and enlightening in that respect.

Mr Kennedy: If the information is available - I didn't see this in the quick time I had to go through the paper. You seem to feel your organization stands for what is more or less the forgotten option, or the option not being well considered by this government, as you've noted, or by previous governments. But has there actually been cause for concern about the status of the people affected, or are we still dealing mainly with theoretical impacts in terms of what's going to happen in the future? I don't mean that those aren't real, and there is a strong pronounced trend away from the institutions, just reannounced and confirmed. I'm wondering about the quality of life available in institutions. I'm not presuming good or bad; I'm just wondering. Has it gotten better or worse under both the funding constraint and what you refer to as the ideological outlook away from those kinds of settings?

Mr Carroll: He wants to criticize us.

Mr Kennedy: Not at all. Mr Carroll, you misconstrued the question; I'm sorry you'd seek to interrupt. I'm really asking, from a standpoint with which I'm sure you're familiar, how things have been in the last year, if they have been better or if they are fine, even with prospects for improvement as the space is vacated and so on, which is what I gathered from the last answer. I just wanted to see if there are any other more direct references to the wellbeing of the people there. I'm certainly satisfied with the answers you've given so far.

Mr Paproski: It's a mixed bag. There is no whole answer for that question. It does seem to me that not all the opportunities have been taken advantage of by the administrators. The actual closure and downsizing process is very disturbing, very stressful. The closure part of it is horrendously stressful to the individuals who don't understand what they have done wrong to be kicked out of the home they've known for 25 years and in the process to have services and supports withdrawn as the facility becomes smaller and smaller. The parents are told that they play ball with the MCSS officials or they will have no options available to them. They are threatened. They have been threatened. The people before us, from MARC, alluded to it. We feel we're being threatened by the people who make the decisions. They are supposed to be serving our needs.

Mr Gravelle: You certainly make a very compelling argument for the fact that decisions are being made for the wrong reasons, that they're being made on the basis that "It's easier to close this place or do something else because we can save that portion than to do other things." I think it is important to get that message across, that either the government is committed to a legitimate support system for those people, whom they say they want to support, or they're not. What you're telling us even in terms of ministry staff is a demanding and unfortunate approach that obviously is upsetting.

As I pointed out earlier, I have a brother who is in a group home — he's developmentally challenged — and the same things bother us. You referred to some of the

decisions in terms of staff cuts being from front-line as opposed to administrative. On a personal basis, our family has gone through that, and you find yourself making decisions.

One finds oneself being critical of the OACL sometimes, but it seems to me that what's happening is that they are being put in a position where they are forced to make decisions. We may not agree with their decisions, but the bottom line is that they are having serious funding cuts imposed on them, and therefore they get — you do sometimes shoot the messenger, I think. Although you don't necessarily agree with what they're doing, do you agree at all that it is based on decisions made by the government that less funding will be given out? There have been severe funding cuts that impact on any organization that's supposed to be delivering services.

Mr Paproski: You had a slip there; you referred to OACL instead of MCSS. Certainly the MCSS people try in some cases to work with the community. I think there's a lot of room for improvement in the relationship, not only with us but with the front-line delivery agencies in the communities as well. There is increasingly a downloading of responsibility and legal liability to volunteer

boards at the same time as there is increasing control by MCSS over what you do at the local level, and the two are not consistent. If you want new ideas and innovative approaches, you don't get them by control from the top.

The Chair: Mr Paproski, Mr Pavlov and all of you who have come today from different parts of Ontario, thank you very much for attending and thank you also for the other background documentation, of which each

member will have a copy.

The committee will resume next Monday. I would like to say, though, that I will be moved from this committee. I am disappointed, frankly, because I have found this a committee from which I have learned a great deal, and I've found that meaningful. I also felt that the committee has worked well. We've had, in relative terms, very good respect and civility and cooperation on the committee. I want to thank the clerk and Hansard and the researcher for helping to make my job very easy. I want to wish you all the very best in your deliberations. I know we'll bump into each other in other committees. Thank you very much.

I declare our committee adjourned. The committee adjourned at 1801.







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# Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Monday 27 January 1997

Standing committee on social development

Funding for persons with disabilities

# Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36e législature

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Lundi 27 janvier 1997

Comité permanent des affaires sociales

Subventions aux personnes handicapées

Chair: Richard Patten Clerk: Tonia Grannum Président : Richard Patten Greffière : Tonia Grannum

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#### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

# STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Monday 27 January 1997

#### ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

#### COMITÉ PERMANENT DES AFFAIRES SOCIALES

Lundi 27 janvier 1997

The committee met at 1542 in room 151.

#### FUNDING FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Consideration of the designated matter pursuant to standing order 125 relating to the impact of the Conservative government's funding and funding cuts on persons with disabilities and their families.

The Chair (Mr Richard Patten): Ladies and gentlemen, seeing that we have a quorum we will resume hearings on standing order 125. I must apologize to our witnesses today. This House from time to time can be unpredictable and it often is.

#### FAMILY VISION SUPPORT NETWORK

The Chair: Today we have the Family Vision Support Network. You have half an hour to make a presentation. Welcome. The time between your presentation and half an hour is divided equally between the three parties to make comment or to ask questions of you and your presentation. Thank you for taking the time, and if you'd please proceed by naming who is present for Hansard purposes, we can proceed.

Ms Teresa Dale: My name is Teresa Dale. I'm a facilitator with the Family Vision Support Network in

Durham region.

Ms Valerie Wilson-Barry: I'm Valerie Wilson-Barry. I'm a facilitator for the Dreamcatcher's family support

group in Durham region.

**Ms Dale:** The issue we'd like to address today is the impact the cuts have had on families and recommendations regarding a funding format. That will be the last page of your handout, so I'll review that at the end.

A direct outcome of the cuts to people with disabilities can be witnessed in the Durham region. For the past four years, parents who have supported their disabled child at home have gathered together. They have done this because community agencies no longer have the resources available to help them in the care of their loved ones. They have no hope of day support, residential support or even the community programs at one time offered by those agencies. What makes this even worse is that special services at home and respite services, their only resources, are now threatened. A brief, Unkept Promises: Lives on Hold, which profiles their circumstances, is now in your hands. It has not been responded to by the present government.

Families with senior parents, families with children leaving school, families whose health or personal circumstances mean that they cannot support their disabled son or daughter at home have only the diminishing resources

of special services at home and the respite services. These families, out of desperation and feeling like outsiders in the agencies they helped to build, have banded together in small family support networks to help each other attack the problem head-on. There are eight such groups in the Durham region, representing close to 100 families. A chronology outlining the effort put forth by these families on behalf of their disabled family member has been provided for you: four pages of meetings, proposals and presentations. Please ask yourselves why this has been necessary for the families who care for our disabled community members.

These family networks have created a unique support system for both themselves and their loved ones: one that involves them in tangible, practical and ongoing ways; one that offers safety and security to their family member and builds on community involvement; one that is costeffective and has demonstrated outcomes for people beyond what was expected; one that is now threatened and has not received any funding, in fact has been cut since the Progressive Conservative Party took office.

Your package includes a second brief, Evidence Concerning the Use of Pressure Tactics and Strategic Inaction by Ministry of Community and Social Services Officials Against Parents of Children with Developmental Disabilities in Durham Region. This brief outlines deliberate attempts by the area office to block these families' requests for help while they carry out their cost-containment agenda — caring, responsible, taxpaying families blocked by those paid with their tax dollars, supposedly for their help. The information contained in the brief was obtained through freedom of information requests at a personal expense of \$150 to the families.

We are here today to ask this committee to listen to the struggles these families live with, the stress, the uncertainty and the worry. It is not their disabled family member who causes this stress but rather it is an underfunded, overbureaucratized system. The following three people are members of Family Vision. Their situations are not hypothetical. They are the situations as they exist for these families. They are representative of many fam-

ilies in our region.

Andrew, age 22, has cerebral palsy, a seizure disorder, and speaks in a few single words. He has periods of incontinence. At age 18 his parents applied for residential support through the ACL and were wait-listed. At this time he was in school full-time, had a full-time summer program when there was no school and received a maximum of 20 hours of special services at home. His parents found a young couple for Andrew to live with in 1994 and the ACL agreed to pay for this arrangement at \$1,000 a month. He was still in school, so no day

supports were needed. Special services at home does not transfer with him, but his parents provided the couple's respite by having Andrew home. That fall the ACL was hit with a 5% cut, and this was passed directly on to Andrew. His parents made up the \$50 a month.

When school finished, so did Andrew's living arrangement. With nowhere to go during the day, the couple did not keep him as they both worked. He moved home and got back on special services. Despite the loss of school support, he still received only 20 hours a week. In an attempt to arrive at a reasonable solution, his family moved to a home with a large basement they hoped to finish for Andrew and have a live-in supporter.

In December they presented their plan to the special services program. The answer was that if they moved help into an apartment in their home, he would be cut from the program; if he moves in with someone else, he is cut from the program. Now without school and with only three hours a week of support from an ACL, he has special services at home, which was reduced in December by \$500 a year.

Today Andrew's family is tired, frustrated and angry. They do all we ask of a parent and nothing makes sense. They are in limbo, with Andrew going part-time to another family and staying home five days a week so that they can maintain the minimal support provided by special services.

1550

Andrew needs to get on with his life, and all his family can do is go day to day wondering what will happen next. They cannot make plans or have any sense of a future for Andrew. They need your help. Andrew's mother shares his life, plans his activities, hires, supervises and pays his workers. She organizes countless meetings on his behalf, always under the constant fear that at any time all her effort will be in vain.

On top of this are her other duties as wife, mother of three other teens, part-time teacher, and caregiver of an ailing senior mother. The arrangement currently costs \$21,000 a year and could be made permanent and full-time for an additional \$18,000, which is far less than the equivalent cost of day supports and residential programs

in a community agency.

Gary is aged 42. He is developmentally handicapped and has some problems with swallowing and his bowels. Gary lived in an institution from the age of six. As the closures happened, he was relocated to Durham Centre and then to MTACL. In that setting he was considered a behaviour problem and was placed in a specialized group

home and day program.

As his frustration and difficulties grew, so did his family's concern. The closer he lived to them, the more they recognized his day-to-day struggles. Following the death of his father in 1992, they decided to bring him home. Gary lives with his sister Valerie, who is a single working woman. She bought a small home and built an addition for Gary. Many weekends he visits his mother in Scarborough, who is a senior. In the fall of 1993 she joined Family Vision to get the funding they need in order to properly support Gary in her home.

Valerie works 40 minutes from home and is under constant stress and worry about what is happening with her brother while she is at work. She calls home several times a day and has purchased a Protect Alert system for him. Gary does not have a day program, but Valerie has managed to get him some part-time work washing windows in the local businesses. The members of the small community of Hampton have been very welcoming.

Valerie receives the maximum special services at home of 20 hours a week and knows this will be reduced to 19 hours when she renews this month. This money gets spent long before she can reapply, even though she tries to stretch it. She is constantly involved in going to different agencies and funding sources to get additional support dollars, and still Gary is at risk.

Recently a neighbour dropped in to check on him and he was blue, having choked on a peanut butter sandwich. He has a lot of scars emotionally from his life in the facility which Valerie is trying to help him deal with.

The family knows they are providing what is best for him in so many ways, but not at this current level of funding. Valerie needs \$30,000 annually to support her brother at home, probably about one third the cost of his previous arrangements. She cannot continue with the stress she is under, and Gary cannot continue to be left at risk.

Allison is 38 years old. She has Down syndrome and a severe seizure disorder. She does not read or write or look after any of her personal care. She wears a protective head mask because of the drop seizures she experiences. Her neurologist is constantly monitoring, adjusting and changing her medication, but to date no product has controlled her disorder and many have negatively affected her behaviour.

Allison's father, Doug, is 71 years old. Her mother is in her late 60s, with frail health. Allison has always lived with her parents and attends a day program of the ACL. In 1992 Doug applied for residential support to his ACL, where he has been a member for the past 30 years. He was worried about what would happen when he could no longer care for her at home. The answer, which shocked him, was a waiting list and dim prospects. Doug had some very serious health scares in 1994 and out of desperation has joined the Family Vision Support Network.

Doug began using special services at home five years ago and currently receives the maximum of 20 hours. Last year he was forced to appeal, an extremely stressful exercise for this family. He is forced to apply to other community sources for additional funding, and the constant stress of applying, waiting and wondering is having its toll on the family. Doug knows that this year he will be cut to 19 hours a week due to the policy of our area office to serve more families with the same resources, which in these cases weren't sufficient to begin with.

Doug would like to keep his daughter at home as long as he is able. He and his wife are seniors on fixed incomes, and despite this, they have taken the responsibility for their daughter and have arranged a discretionary trust to assist her when they are gone. They were hit this year with the changes to the drug program and have paid out \$350 since July above the deductible for the three of them and understand they need to pay that deductible again beginning in April. Doug needs \$15,000 a year annually to support Allison in his home. If he is not

supported, Allison's care will fall to the system and it will cost a great deal more.

Allison's situation was brought to the attention of the Legislature last October, thanks to Gerard Kennedy. The Hansard dated October 22, 1996, is the second-last page in your package. Despite the promises made that day by Janet Ecker, Doug has not been contacted.

Ms Wilson-Barry: I'm here today to speak with you who are the representatives of the government in power with the mandate to support, protect and serve the citizens of Ontario. You have initiated these public hearings to give voice to people impacted by the decisions and actions taken by this government. I want you to hear at first hand the results and crisis that this government continues to create through chaos and the poor use of communication with those whom they deeply affect.

In Durham region we have experienced an incredible growth of people. It's partly due to the fact that we are the bedrooms of Metropolitan Toronto. Our funding has historically been lower than other areas across the province on a per person basis for those with developmental challenges. Despite this, we have managed to provide services to the best of our ability. These services have been created, fought for and monitored by dedicated persons, most of whom are family members of those whom these services were to have supported. This yoke has become a noose, with each struggle to inform our government only resulting in the tightening of the noose.

Over the past five years, and even more subtly the five years before that, the funding allotted to the agencies to support vocational rehabilitation, education and recreational needs has been insidiously reduced. Persons leaving sheltered workshops, schools and the institutions had the funding attached to them whittled away.

You said administrative cuts were not to affect frontline support, but they have. Community agencies are scraped to the skeleton now with closed-door policies due to your constraints. Dollars in the community have been stretched to the point that places the very people who need support and protection in less than safe environments, less than human conditions, and where they go for help and who they speak to, who knows?

You have a great deal of documentation from families concerned over their workshops, the future care of their children, from agencies which are unable to meet the new demands of individual needs and skeleton staff who are doing less than the job they could do if funding reflected the need.

Over the past five years I've been thinking a lot about what we have presented as supports for developmentally challenged people. I myself have been working in this field since 1971. I have seen institutions closed. I was in Orillia in 1974 when those first people were brought in homes and I've seen a lot of changes. I'm also seeing a lot of things that are happening that are starting to look like the same thing.

In 1974 the Ministry of Health gave over all supports and services for the developmentally handicapped to the Ministry of Community and Social Services. That was a good move. But there was a lot of fear in our community when there was discussion about these same people being returned to the Ministry of Health, which couldn't

provide for them in the first place. Now we've got people who are living in communities who are suffering unbelievably and families that are really falling apart because of what's happening. We want to make the people who are making those decisions very aware of that.

In my evaluation, I think we've created a lot for the disabled, but over the last years this government has coldly and unabashedly shaken the very foundation of the people's lives. You are consciously choosing to continue on this path against people who are for the most part unable to fight back because they either don't understand or cannot communicate with you. Their advocates speak out and the government spokespeople have turned deaf ears, I'm sure because they don't expect retaliation or a fight from these vulnerable people.

1600

What we're doing now was done before. The Ministry of Health decided to shut down all psychiatric facilities and provide community-based support homes and services, yet we all know the number of ex-psychiatric patients who are living in the banes of poverty. Street people are now not only the problem of big cities, they are also living in towns and villages across Ontario. They die yearly from exposure, malnutrition and violence. They are despised by society at large, but they too are members of someone's family who believe that their loved ones would be well looked after after they pass away. Did we help these people to have what they need? Those people now, are we helping them? Yet this is the path you want people to follow as faithfully and as blindly as the people before us.

The families of Durham region collectively say, "No, no, no." We will fight as we have for the past few years in earnest to stop what is happening. We have followed government protocol only to be passed from pillar to post and told we were always speaking to the wrong people or that we were asking too much. We have created better options that are safer, more individually appropriate to each person, and those who have been able to receive help or hang on to the help they are receiving have had the best outcomes we have ever experienced in Ontario.

It hasn't been done with the cooperation of this government. It has been done in spite of it. The family support groups are demonstrating their successes to others in creating a fire of determination for other families. Family support groups are initiating action, following through and eventually being heard. Today is an example.

If across Ontario people were lying down and accepting the new directions of this government, you wouldn't have had to have a public hearing into the impacts your cuts are having on disabled persons. Beware. Everyone knows someone who is disabled, be they ill, physically challenged, developmentally challenged, very young, at risk or struggling in a school system that's unresponsive, or those who are elderly. You will hear more and more from your constituents. They're your voters.

We have followed the directions from every level of government to address our concerns. These are not new and, shamefully, they have not been addressed. Thousands of letters from Durham region have not been responded to by the area office, the minister's constituency office or developmental services.

The only response we see is in interest by the opposition members. Why is this? You have a responsibility that is being ignored. Meetings where we have shown and proven a better way of supporting people have resulted in the word that your restructuring document is already signed, sealed and delivered. When this government first came into power, we were told we would be consulted. No one who has seen any part of this document has seen any of the recommendations or any of the ideas to allude to any other kind of consideration to what else is happening.

From our understanding, none of the initiatives were even considered. Promises to come and see what we've been doing were unkept. You wonder why such briefs as those passed to you have been written. Every family and every group is open to have you come and see and judge which is the healthiest, the least intrusive, a better bang

for your buck and the most successful.

At this point, I want to tell you all that addressing the most in need will create another population and a greater population of most in need. Prices since this government has come into power have increased because the generations with aging parents and younger children will continue to come to you. There's nothing in their community that they can access.

Family breakdown is at an all-time high. You are threatening the removal of the very supports, including, as I say, age, that hava made it possible for families to keep their loved ones at home. Why? If it takes a family \$10,000 to meet their son's or daughter's needs, are you saying they must step back and let someone else have

that money because they are more in need?

An analogy I'd like you to think about is this: Water can come in many colours and the colour of a water could stand for a certain support or a certain need, but water is water. It's not oil, it's not gasoline and it can't be substituted for water. Disabilities are just that. You take away, say, the blue water representing transportation aids, and you end up with people who can't seek adequate employment, can't get to work, can't earn a living, can't participate in their community, can't seek adequate health monitoring, can't live in their own family homes, can't feed their spirits because they're so isolated. What you end up with is an unhealthy person with lost or limited life skills, living at risk of abuse, neglect and abandonment. What a price to pay. Strip someone of their dignity.

The developmentally challenged will always require support to some degree. Do you give it to them as soon as possible, always building on independence and selfesteem with the person, or do you wait until the family is broken or unable to cope due to health or aging and

then begin? No, you stop the insanity now.

Families and people are proud. They don't ask for any more than they absolutely require. Families' self-respect and knowledge prevent anyone asking for more than they need. They have felt at first hand what others go through in trying every way possible to help. They do not want your government to take responsibility for the disabled. No one wants to give up their son or daughter. No brother or sister wants to see a brother or sister institutionalized because of the lack of services that would support that person at home. We have solutions, cost-

effective solutions, people willing to work hard, to help, to meet with those whom you choose to help set this up. What are you willing to do? We see no restructuring in your government. You're certainly working on it in the communities with the agencies.

In summary to this, I would like to say the families are being forced by you into the public arena and we're getting sympathy and response. In the government arena we are ignored. We waste our time and our energy and

there are no results.

There's one person I would like to talk about, as Teresa has talked about two individuals. His name is Ryan. Ryan was born with a very rare type of neurological disorder called communicating hydrocephalus which has resulted in disabilities, both physical and developmental. He requires 24-hour support and needs help with everyday activities. Ryan requires high support for his personal care. He is ambulatory, but walks with an awkward gait. He has perceptual handicaps which limit hand control and disturb his visual depth and cause him to be unsteady on his feet, so he does fall easily. Running is awkward.

To meet Ryan, he is so sensitive and such a happy person. He feels situations very deeply and he has a wonderful disposition and enjoys people. He is a delight to be with. In reviewing Ryan's input over the past five years at high school, he has learned virtually nothing. He's in his last year now, and his teacher tells us there are behaviour problems because he is bored. He's bored because he's been doing the same program for five years now with the same teacher. There's no plan or evaluation of what Ryan will do as far as employment past school. The association is full. That's not an appropriate place for Ryan anyway.

We looked at Ryan's needs. We have him assessed for a visual and OT assessment. Ryan's speech has just recently blossomed. He's using incredibly complex words for Ryan. He's making himself understood. He's initiating conversations with people, jumps in with his own opinions, asks questions now which he wasn't doing before. The assessment showed he needs daily, ongoing OT and speech therapy. He's on a very strong learning curve and

now is the time to address it.

We have been everywhere looking for money and there isn't any. We were able to locate the assessment through the use of a personal health plan, but that's assessment and that's monitoring.

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Ryan's family also suffered two years of a very personal crisis in that they were left without a father. All three of Ryan's other siblings have gone through hell on earth, as has Ryan. His mother is stretched to the limit. She feels she cannot do any more than she is doing. Her other children are continuing to suffer.

In making this presentation, I said that I was going to point out that one more deterioration in any of her children was going to push her to a point where she had to make a decision — and right now, she's on medical support. That's the last thing she wants, but she's been asking for help for two years now. She's in crisis, her four children are in crisis, and she gets no response from this government. She tries very hard within the family

support groups to help other people, to be there for people. It's very simple: She needs individualized funding and that's what she's hanging on for, individualized funding so she can direct for Ryan, with Ryan, supports that he needs. She also wants you to know that she is one of a very large population of people who are in the same boat. What are we going to do about it?

These recommendations Teresa and I put together so

that they would finish off our presentation.

Ms Dale: We'd like the committee to consider the following recommendations: Restore the funds to the developmental services budget which have been eroded at the expense of these families over the past four years; with these funds create a family-directed, individual funding system based on equitable supports to families who care for their children in the community, up to a maximum of the equivalent to community placement; design this family-directed funding system to be annualized so that it allows for long-term planning; tie the funding system to an existing support system, do not create a new bureaucracy; an expansion of special services at home for adults which allows more flexible use and greater funding capacity or prorating the annual support on a monthly basis, which could be sent out as part of a person's FBA, as is currently being done in Alberta.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We only have about a minute and a half, so let me ask you if there is something you'd like to add. We don't have enough time to have each party ask questions, but perhaps you'd like to underline a point that you've made in your presenta-

tion or elaborate for another 90 seconds.

Ms Dale: I think I'd like to make a point of saying that about 10% of the families who are presently in our community are the families who never did get into the supports the community agencies have, and those supports seem cut off to them right now. They are not being adequately served by special services at home because of the funding limitation and the limitation on how it can be used. We would really ask the province to consider a system of funding that is tied directly to people with disabilities that can be directed by their families or their support networks and can be used to purchase the services that are required on a very individual basis.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation; very thoughtful. We appreciate your taking the time to put that together. If there are questions that members

have, we'll be in touch with you.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): Just a point for the record, Mr Chairman: The detailed background documents will be a matter of record for the committee?

The Chair: Yes.

#### TRANSPORTATION ACTION NOW

The Chair: Our next group is Transportation Action Now Inc, Mr Little. Welcome. You know our procedure. You have half an hour, and any time between your presentation and the half-hour is divided up equally, if we have time, for questions or comments. Please proceed.

Mr Stephen Little: I wish to thank the standing committee for the opportunity to come and present this situation to you and speak to you about the difficulties

faced by seniors and persons with disabilities in accessing specialized transportation services at this time.

Transportation Action Now, or TAN, is a coalition of over 100 organizations in Ontario promoting accessible transportation. I am the chairperson of that particular organization.

It may be a truism to say that accessible transportation underlies all aspects of full participation in the life of our communities, but we in the disabled community are still hearing municipal politicians argue that accessible transportation is a charity or frill or special program and therefore should not be a responsibility of government.

Unfortunately, the Ontario Human Rights Commission has never had the opportunity to rule on the status of paratransit services, so we have no legal basis for claiming accessible transportation as a right. Nor has this government honoured its commitment to enter into negotiations for an Ontarians with Disabilities Act, ODA, which might have established our claim to publicly funded transportation services comparable to those provided to the able-bodied public. We expect to sponsor a charter challenge in the near future to determine if transportation is a right, and also whether people with disabilities are entitled under law to some form of accessible transportation.

Our organization is very concerned with the future implications for paratransit of delegating transit services to municipalities. Transit service is not like water or sewer services, which are discretionary. Public transit serves all who do not own or drive a car, not just in my town or yours but throughout the province, and even people who visit from other provinces or other countries.

We find it significant that Mr Palladini did not see fit to mention people with disabilities, paratransit services or the concept of accessibility once in his news release of January 15. For the Minister of Transportation, the needs and concerns of 10% of the population are not considered worth addressing.

If the province vacates the field of public transportation, we are doomed to a patchwork of municipal services with no consistency or standards. The province may try to set policy, but without funding clout it will be a meaningless exercise, as I'll refer to later on.

In terms of reciprocity, not only do public transit services cater to residents, but in the past they've served visitors from out of town, out of province or in some cases even out of the country and from abroad. However, in the past year, many paratransit services in cities and towns throughout Ontario have cancelled their commitment to carry visitors from another jurisdiction. For example, Wheel-Trans here in Metro Toronto had a reciprocal agreement with the surrounding regional municipalities in the GTA to carry their clients into Metro. This commitment has now been cancelled. This means that people with disabilities from Peel cannot travel to Metro for any reason whatsoever, whether it's hospitals, schools, jobs or visiting — you know, social life.

At Transportation Action Now we get telephone calls from all over the world asking about our transit systems here in Ontario and how visitors can access them. A recent resident from Florida who uses a wheelchair wanted to visit Toronto for a week but was told he could not use Wheel-Trans unless he went through a registration process which would take upwards of two weeks to complete. TAN recommended that he rent an accessible van in Buffalo.

Nor is the TTC the only culprit. We know that many municipalities have instituted this restriction on service. Getting information about what is going on is difficult. The Ontario Urban Transit Association is preparing a report, but we have been waiting six months for it to appear. We also fear that some service restrictions will be hidden from the general public.

Before the province decided to withdraw its support for paratransit services, there was some degree of consistency in who was eligible. Although the province insisted that its criterion of "ability to walk up or down three steps or walk 175 metres" was a guideline only, municipalities generally accepted this as a standard. Now the province has disowned this guideline, and the result is chaos.

Already we are observing the discrepancies in who can or cannot access paratransit services in Ontario. Metro has agreed with the TTC that ambulatory disabled persons, mostly seniors, can be cut off. This has led to over 5,000 people, including people with strokes, polio, arthritis, kidney failure and arthritis, being disfranchised in Metro. Other communities are developing criteria for who is eligible and who is not.

The province has stated that it will continue to be involved in safety standards, but people with disabilities are doubtful. We simply observe what has been happening with safety standards related to the trucking industry

to feel deep concern about the nature of this commitment. We also feel abandoned by the province because there are no longer to be any provincial subsidies for either capital or operating expenditures for paratransit services. This has always been seen as one way that the province ensured that paratransit services were provided and that the municipalities kept their end of the bargain. Without provincial funding support, there is nothing to prevent a municipality from downgrading or eliminating a paratransit service altogether.

The province also promised to subsidize only low-floor, accessible buses in future when new vehicles were purchased by municipalities. This was a very effective lever to force municipalities to increase accessibility for all its citizens. Now that incentive is also gone. The TTC has led the way in avoiding its commitment by purchasing 135 lift-equipped buses, which are unsafe, inefficient and out of date. Quite frankly, they just don't work.

The province created a grant program also to assist taxi companies to convert standard vans to accessible taxis, a very expensive operation but one which provides greater flexibility and cheaper rides. Now this grant program is also gone and there is no longer any incentive to provide accessible taxis in Ontario municipalities.

I referred to the issue of parking before, and although the issue of parking for persons with a disabled persons parking permit is not strictly a transit problem, it illustrates what happens when municipalities are left to deal with a transportation problem. Since the province introduced the special parking permit in the early 1980s, each municipality has developed its own parking rules. Thus,

drivers using the card never know the parking regulations if they visit a town outside their own.

The province was attempting to develop a standard bylaw which would make it clear to drivers what the rules are throughout Ontario, but the municipalities have not been able to agree on the terms of this bylaw. So disabled drivers with permits are hounded by police for illegal parking and our organization gets calls on this on a very regular basis.

The province owes it to the citizens of Ontario not to withdraw from intermunicipal transit planning, coordination and integration, particularly for paratransit users, who usually have no other transportation options. Ordinary people are being treated unfairly, and it is likely to get worse. Moving people is not like providing water or sewer services. It requires more planning and greater flexibility. Our organization lives in hope, but we remain sceptical that this issue will be addressed.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Little. We will begin today with the Liberal Party, Mrs McLeod.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much for your presentation and for being here. I can appreciate your scepticism, because it seems to me you've been raising these issues over and over again without very much response. I suspect that you would be rather sceptical as well of the province's claims that they can maintain standards in program areas where they are getting out of funding. Certainly that is true in transportation.

Mr Little: Funding seems to be a lever that has to be reckoned with and we're not at all optimistic that standards or guidelines will be respected by municipalities that have to deal with ever-tightening budgets. They will make choices based on the needs of their local citizenry and, as a result, you will have a patchwork of inequity, if you will, particularly where municipalities abut each other. For all intents and purposes, we keep talking about a GTA, but it's going to be made up of several municipalities. Megacity or not, they are still going to be separate jurisdictions that are going to deal with the issues the way they feel is appropriate and it will not have consistency from one area to the other.

Mrs McLeod: As you point out, it's been very difficult to get the issue of disabled transportation into a high priority area under past funding arrangements. Now with municipalities having to also try and find dollars for long-term care and child care and to fund the entire social housing portfolio as well as sewer and water and roads, it's going to be that much more difficult for disabled transportation to have a place on the agenda.

When you outlined the loss of standards that accompanies the loss of provincial subsidies and grants that the province used in order to back up its standards, are all of those changes in subsidies and grant programs that you've outlined the result of what we call the mega-week announcements? Was that all part of that? Some of those occurred even before then, did they?

Mr Little: Yes. There have been pressures on the Ministry of Transportation over the years to meet certain budget objectives, and when you're faced with the issue of repairing a bridge or providing an accessible vehicle or at least a funding program for an accessible vehicle, these are difficult choices, and I certainly don't blame the

program managers. They're simply following through in very difficult circumstances.

But the fact remains that transportation issues for persons with disabilities constantly get pushed to the back of the agenda because it would seem there is either not a constituency out there that can raise a big enough fuss to get the attention and the profile it needs or, more recently, those people who do raise it are dismissed as special — I even forget what the term is.

Mrs McLeod: Special interest groups?

Mr Little: Yes, special interest groups. Therefore, the arguments just get discounted by that much, having that label attached to you.

There is going to come a point when, with the changing demographics, there is going to be a shift from an able-bodied population to the fact that 10% of the population and more is going to grow into a significant proportion and there are going to be huge, huge implications because they cannot access public transportation services.

If we had to redo the clock and take us back to 1950, the subways that are being built would be built with accessibility in mind. It's far more complicated to renovate after the fact than it is while you're doing it, but unfortunately, and most recently illustrated by the Scarborough rapid transit decision, they just said, "What's the point in building an accessible feature when it links into an inaccessible rest of the network?" Therefore they just, as we often say, gave us the shaft: "No elevator, but the shaft is there."

Mrs McLeod: I apologize for not having realized that there were specific provincial grant and subsidy programs that had been discontinued prior to the mega-week shift, and I guess I'm struck by it because we've raised the issue of transportation for the disabled repeatedly in the Legislature. The answer we've consistently had back is that there have been no cuts to the disabled, that any cuts to disabled transit were made by Metropolitan Toronto or by other municipal jurisdictions, but these were specific provincial grant and subsidy programs that were cut.

Mr Little: Yes. What I was referring to in particular was the accessible taxi program. That was not a transit service per se but was more a program designed to supplement and create a greater variety of accessible

vehicles serving the public in need.

Some municipalities have actually embraced the concept of accessible taxies; other municipalities are a little leery of them because there are safety issues associated with poor maintenance. In fact, some of the operators are reluctant to get into having an accessible vehicle or a series of accessible vehicles because the general public has a perception that, "Oh, that's just for persons with disabilities," and they don't realize that it offers them phenomenal leg room, but there's the stigma of having that wheelchair symbol on the side. So that particular program was meant to supplement the arsenal, if you will, that municipalities could use to address the issue of paratransit for persons with disabilities.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I'm surprised to hear that as well. I didn't know that program had been eliminated. I did notice, however, that the

program that was in place — I think it was a \$3-million fund — to fund accessible entries into buildings was done away with and reannounced as a \$1.5-million fund as if this was new money, but it's actually a program cut. It's kind of hard to keep up with the smoke-and-mirrors game that's been going on.

I was interested in your comment about the fact that with the provincial government no longer participating in any subsidization of municipal transit, in particular just for a moment talking about the capital side, they lose a lever to influence the type of vehicles, for example, that are purchased and the accessibility of those vehicles.

I think this is a huge lost opportunity when we have had in the last number of years a policy in place, because the province was paying 75% of the cost of purchase of buses, that as the Orion VI became available, the new bus came on the market with the low floor, that that would have to be what the municipalities purchased. In fact, it also helps build a bus industry which is now selling accessible buses around the world and yet not in our own jurisdiction because we're changing the rules. So I find that extraordinary.

Do you know why the TTC has been so obstinate in this approach and why they've gone to the lift vehicles?

Mr Little: They haven't confided in me with their deepest thoughts on the issue, but it would seem from what I can understand that there was an urgent need to replace a significant number of buses in the fleet. I'll give credit to the TTC: They did recognize that the issue of accessibility was one that was going to really bite them if they just went and bought regular fleet buses. So they entered into an exception kind of agreement, if you will, under this policy and were given permission to buy 135 lift-equipped buses, knowing that it was not ideal but recognizing that their aging fleet did need some replacement.

Much as we had predicted, the lift-equipped buses are fraught with problems, particularly in the wintertime, and as a result, even the bus drivers themselves are reluctant to use the lifts. At this particular point there hasn't been overwhelming demand on the part of persons with disabilities or seniors simply because of the negative reaction they get from the bus driver through to the passengers when the lift breaks down or it takes a little extra time or whatever. So there's a lot of negative stigma associated with trying to exercise your rights of being able to access public transit. But it clearly is a huge mistake and one that is going to take a little longer to be rectified, given the fact that they've sunk so much money into the 135 lift-equipped buses.

Ms Lankin: At this point in time the government seems intent on proceeding to download all of the transportation costs on to municipalities, along with a number of other things, as you heard last week. I was interested that the Minister of Community and Social Services told us that the provision of child care services by municipalities will be mandatory, but she doesn't quite have a definition of that yet and we'll wait to see the fine print when it comes out.

But it strikes me that the provision of paratransit should also be made mandatory. In the last round of budget cuts — and we know the whole débâcle in Metro

where Mr Palladini cut the money to Wheel-Trans and then said, "No, you can restore it," but didn't force it there was no mechanism that the province forced to have a certain proportion of the funding go to paratransit.

Now that they're devolving all of the responsibility, is it not incumbent on them to ensure that there are paratransit services of some sort and to set some provincial standard which they make mandatory, like they say

they're going to do for child care?

Mr Little: That's what we will be recommending when we're given an opportunity to come and comment on all the bills associated with the megacity announcements. But indeed you're right. If you're going to download a service or offload a service, then the concept of a service usable by all should be inherent in it, and when I say usable by all, that obviously includes persons with disabilities and seniors with mobility impairments.

The issue that will come back up is, well, it's going to cost a fortune to do this and therefore we'll have to go on an extremely long track in order to meet an objective. I think the disabled community is cognizant of this fact, but the bottom line remains: Let's get on the track and let's start doing it; let's commit to a plan. As an aside, the effort behind the Ontarians with Disabilities Act would in fact do that. It would lay out a timetable to say let's try to move things through. It's not going to be done overnight, but at least if you have a commitment and an obligation to follow through on the track -

Ms Lankin: Where does the government's commitment on that bill stand? What have you heard lately?

Mr Little: We don't know.

The Chair: Sorry, Ms Lankin; your time's up. Mr

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): Thank you very much for your presentation. I think it was either last August or September that Minister Palladini introduced CTAP, the community transportation action plan. Are you familiar with that plan?

Mr Little: Yes, we are. We are applying for funding

under CTAP.

Mr Pettit: Do you support it?

Mr Little: We see it as a step towards resolving the transportation issues that impact on many elements of a given community, ves.

Mr Pettit: Do you think CTAP will improve accessi-

bility or rideability?

Mr Little: The actual process that CTAP is going to create or set in motion is unproven at this point. I mean, we're at the very early stages of it. But the theory is that it would at least recognize all of the issues associated with transportation within communities and come up with a plan to maximize those resources that exist within a community to address transportation issues. That's my understanding of it anyway.

Mr Pettit: I'm also told, and maybe the Chair might back this up, that in Ottawa-Carleton they saved in the neighbourhood of \$1 million over four years by contracting out a lot of their specialized transit. Do you feel there is room for greater efficiency within the municipalities?

Mr Little: Yes, we do.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): I appreciated your presentation today and I was conscious of your comment about the Ontarians with Disabilities Act and the discussions that had been made even before the last provincial election. I know it is an intention of the minister to proceed with that during this term, as promised in the election. The first objective was to deal with the equal opportunity plan, and then with the initiative for vulnerable adults. Now I think the answer is to move towards an ODA within the economic goalposts of the province.

In that regard, I'd like to turn your attention to some of the aspects of your presentation. Let me set aside the Orion, because I know my colleague Mr Smith would like to ask some questions, but particularly in the area of reciprocity, you raise an interesting question here about the ability of individuals from across the province from across North America, in fact — to visit Metropolitan Toronto and feel able to access the Wheel-Trans program. Do I understand that to be taken as you saving that no matter where you come from, you should be able to access the services? And if that is true, how could a municipality, or a province for that matter, give some kind of reasonable planning to anticipate what the demand might be?

Mr Little: I think one would have to perhaps study some other jurisdictions where they have reciprocity. It would be a greater planning problem to try to anticipate those people from outside a normal community. In other words, I'm not talking Mississauga to downtown Metropolitan Toronto; I'm talking about people coming in from overseas or up from the States.

Mr Shea: Or from Florida or somewhere visiting here for a week or two and they'd like to use Wheel-Trans?

Mr Little: Yes, bearing in mind that what is currently done for the disabled parking permit is that the province has entered into agreements with other state jurisdictions to have, let's say, a disabled parking permit from Florida recognized as valid in Toronto with all of the appropriate privileges that are granted in the Toronto area. The same applies if I were to visit Florida: My disabled parking permit would allow me to park in those designated spots.

Mr Shea: I understand that with parking permits. I think there's some rationale there.

Mr Little: It's harder to track with people coming in from outside, let's say, coming in from Florida, to use that example again. The visitors, I don't think, number in the tens of thousands or anything like that. We're only talking maybe a couple of hundred potential visitors from Florida who might come up and actually need the services of the paratransit system. From our perspective, first of all if the public system is accessible, then there is less need for a parallel transit system.

That issue aside, if the paratransit system is able to offer a variety of vehicles to address needs, such as an accessible taxi, such as Orion and whatever else may be going, then the request should be able to be met by somebody simply phoning up and saying: "I'm a visitor from Florida. I'm entitled to a service in Florida, and here's the information you need." I would suggest that these out-of-town visitors be given the benefit of the doubt and the opportunity to enjoy whatever the city has to offer.

We're really more concerned with the issue of somebody from Markham wanting to live in Markham who has a job in downtown Toronto. Ideally we would like to get them to the GO train so they could then hop the GO train and forget an hour and a half of sitting in the traffic. At this end, down at Union Station, they would then be able to hop a local feeder or service to take them to University and King, for instance, or go through the tunnel or something. That's the ideal we would like to see.

As happens in a lot of cases, if you want to go to the Scarborough Town Centre, which isn't on a GO train line, from Markham you're stuck with making arrangements with two service providers and you get dropped at a mall somewhere or a prearranged meeting spot. If one service is running behind or the other one ahead, you could be stranded there, and this gets enormously complicated once the mall closes or where these convenient drop-off spots are. As a result, you just don't have the ability to go from one jurisdiction to another, and that's just not a situation that is there for other people.

Mr Shea: The service on demand -

The Chair: Mr Shea, I'm sorry. Time is up. Mr Little, thank you for your very thoughtful presentation.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Chair, a point of information for the committee: Mr Little indicated that their organization had applied for funding from the government for the program that Mr Pettit referred to, the community transportation action plan. I was looking through the background material we have as a committee and I don't find a reference to any provincial funding for that particular program. I wonder if we might be able to determine whether there is funding and whether that funding has now been shifted to the municipalities as their responsibility, along with the other transportation shifts.

The Chair: We'll ask our researcher to look into that.

## HEAD INJURY ASSOCIATION OF LONDON AND DISTRICT

The Chair: We now have the Head Injury Association of London and District. Would you please come forward. Welcome to the hearings this afternoon. Thank you for coming all the way from London. That's London, Ontario, I take it.

Mr Gary Davies: Yes, it is.

The Chair: I guess you know the procedure. Please announce your names and proceed. Thank you.

**Dr** Andrea Lazosky: I am Dr Andrea Lazosky and I am the president of the Head Injury Association of London and District.

Mr Davies: I'm Gary Davies. I'm the executive director of the association.

**Dr Lazosky:** Just to preface, you'll notice that we're from one area in Ontario, southwestern Ontario, so some of our recommendations at the end will be specific to initiatives happening in the London region. I think those things could serve as models for application in other regions of Ontario, but you'll notice that we specifically talk about the area we come from.

I hope you all have the handout we provided in front of you. On the first page is some information about brain injury and about our association. On the next pages we gathered information from individuals with brain injury, their families and friends, health care providers, the association's board members and committee members and others in the community about current issues and their possible solutions for individuals with brain injury in Ontario. Many of the comments will apply to all disabled individuals.

Head injuries are often called invisible because a person may look physically well and be able to talk but still be significantly disabled. The brain controls all of the body's functions: thinking, feeling, moving, breathing. Even mild to moderate brain injuries can cause changes in personality, thinking, memory, judgement; there can be loss of sight and hearing, coordination, loss of strength, even paralysis. The person may not be able to return to work or school, may not be able to look after a family or ever lead an independent life again.

Every year in Ontario, 12,000 people are hospitalized with a brain injury: 900 of them die in hospital and 3,000 of them never return to their normal way of life.

I'd like to draw your attention to the issues and recommendations on the following pages. This handout details issues under five main headings. The first is about children with brain injury, the second is "Access to Services," the third is "Repatriation," the fourth is "Community Integration" and the fifth is "Prevention." We took feedback from everybody we talked to, and they seemed to fall into five main themes. This is how we've organized and are presenting the information to you. On the final page is a number of recommendations.

I'd like to use my presentation time to just highlight some of the main issues and opportunities for improvement and then leave as much time as possible for discussion at the end of our time.

I'd like to start with the paediatric brain injury population. There is an apparently poor understanding of the unique issues and needs of children with brain injury. The majority of children acquire their brain injury through falls, bicycle accidents and sports injuries, not through motor vehicle accidents; therefore the majority have no private funding for services.

There is only one inpatient paediatric rehabilitation facility for children with brain injury in Ontario. This facility has 10 inpatient beds; therefore most children are discharged from an acute care facility directly to their home community.

There is great regional variability in the services that are available to brain-injured children. There is a lack of specialized education and training for teachers dealing with brain-injured children. There is a lack of good school liaison. There is a lack of specialized assessment services such as paediatric neuropsychology in all the communities. There is a lack of behavioural management for children, a lack of quality respite care for parents and limited availability of rehabilitation services such as occupational therapy and speech-language pathology.

With respect to availability of community resources, our first recommendation is as follows: The Children's Hospital of Western Ontario, London Health Sciences Centre and the Thames Valley Children's Centre have submitted a proposal to district health councils to facili-

tate and coordinate services for brain-injured children in their home communities. Right now they're in the process of holding community meetings to receive feedback about the proposal but the initiative has not yet been funded. At some point this is going to come to government, and we hope that initiative will be supported.

With respect to the need for behaviour management programs for children, often children at different stages of development are not able to express their thoughts and feelings or don't understand why they are having problems after a brain injury. They communicate this frustra-

tion and anger by acting out aggressively.

The Child and Parent Resource Institute, CPRI, in London has expressed an interest and a drive to develop a behaviour management program for children. They have some expertise and want to develop more in this area. Unfortunately because of reduced funding they are downsizing their current services, but there's the interest there and a good potential and some expertise in developing behaviour management programs for children, and some space available because they have been closing some units.

Now I'd like to move on to a second issue: access to services. First of all I'd like to address the Ontario automobile insurance law under Bill 59 and just speak to individuals who are covered under this law.

Access to funding for services starts with what is accepted as evidence of brain injury. Until a brain injury has been established, there can be delays to treatment, or multiple, costly and sometimes unnecessary assessments carried out; for example, a neuropsychological assessment for the plaintiff, a neuropsychological assessment for the defendant. Also, funding can run out while the individual remains impaired and still in need of services.

Our recommendations to deal with those issues: First of all there need to be established diagnostic guidelines or criteria that can reliably detect the presence of brain injury and are accepted by all parties involved, including the insurance industry and the legal system, as evidence of brain injury. Some of the new diagnostic criteria that could be looked at include access to new brain-imaging technology such as PET scans; neuropsychological assessments; criteria such as loss of consciousness or length of unconsciousness; length of post-traumatic amnesia and so forth. These have been shown to be predictors of outcome in the research literature.

The patient, the medical personnel and health service providers, the insurance industry and the legal system must agree on the evidence needed to diagnose a brain injury in order to ensure that individuals receive the benefits to which they are entitled. Just to say that an individual has a brain injury if something shows up on a CAT scan isn't enough. For example, individuals with Alzheimer disease, and even quite advanced in the stages of Alzheimer disease, can have very little evidence of brain deterioration on a CAT scan. There might be some mild atrophy, but they can still be very significantly impaired, as we're well aware.

With regard to providing for length of services, this is particularly needed. I hear this a lot from parents of children who are very slow-stream, who are very slow to recover. They are gaining a small amount over a very long period of time. For example, if a child has an injury to the front part of their brain, they're going to act differently when they sustain that injury at, say, ages 5 or 8 than when they reach maturity in adolescence. Once you reach adolescence, the frontal lobes really are important in teaching you to use good judgement, know right from wrong, not be impulsive, all those things that are critical to the transition into adulthood. So new problems for the individual could emerge at adolescence even if the brain injury occurred several years previously.

The third issue I'll address is acquired brain injury not due to a motor vehicle accident. This would include people who are injured in falls or sports injuries, people who have brain infections, strokes or brain tumours. In this category would also be included individuals with brain injuries sustained in a motor vehicle accident but who have run out of funding and are relying on the

publicly funded system.

We need to ensure that individuals are not denied care due to a lack of funding. Currently the public system is overburdened and tends to stress assessment rather than rehabilitation efforts, because the first stage in the process is that you need to assess the needs of an individual. Many needed public services either don't exist or don't meet the demand for them. The expertise exists out there in Ontario but we need funding and staff to develop the needed programs.

One issue that's often raised is about the two-tiered system. I appreciate that while there are sources of private funding available we're always going to have a two-tiered system, but what's not acceptable to me is when you're going from no services versus full services.

The fourth issue I'd like to address is community integration. This is when people are integrated back into their home community. They have several needs. The first is that they need to have a way to get around. We just heard an excellent presentation on the paratransit system and transportation in general for the disabled. A second need is housing. They need accessible, affordable, supported living arrangements. Often, remember, these people are going to be on limited incomes or benefits. They need community support.

The recommendations with regard to community integration: First of all, it would make sense to support largely volunteer-run, consumer-driven, non-profit community organizations like the Head Injury Association of London and District. I apologize, but I had to say that; it makes sense. You're addressing the needs of the consumer and you're getting a lot for your dollar. For example, we recently received financial support from the long-term-care division for community education in the various districts we serve, and that's going to go to great use.

The second recommendation is that the government include consumers in developing policy, developing service planning and evaluating the current and new systems and programs. We just have one question or concern, and that is the shift in responsibility for programs from the province to the municipalities. We're wondering if that's going to lead to a greater difference in availability of services to people depending on where they live rather than what they need. For example, how will the government ensure that a person from Port Arthur and a person

from Port Stanley will receive services based on similar standards?

1700

The last issue I'm going to address is prevention. I saved this one for last because, boy, we'd prefer not to have to be here. If there was any way we could have it that head injuries didn't exist, that would be ideal. The number one starting point in serving the population in the communities is to prevent a brain injury from ever happening. We applaud the government for passing the bicycle helmet legislation. We only hope every day that it will be extended to include adults in the near future.

Mr Davies: I have a few concluding comments to walk you through the other information that is in the package you received today, starting with some general information about the Head Injury Association of London and District and the usual kinds of statistical bits and pieces that apply to an organization like our own, and even a whole sheet of statistics on head injury in Ontario.

The other bits of information here relate to a newsletter, first of all, that we produce monthly. Apologies: We don't have one for February; it's at the printer's as we speak. However, the December issue, which was our last one, was produced by a volunteer who is a survivor and a member of our association. You'll see in here a couple of articles, including the article on the front page, which were also written by survivors. It's very helpful for them, for their self-esteem certainly, to be able to work on documents like this. It's certainly better than I can do and it uses a volunteer to do it and is a great contribution.

On the very last page of the four-page little handout that has a pie chart and a bar graph in here, just a quick example of some very recent data that support the use of helmets and indicate in there the need for prevention types of activities that our association, as Dr Lazosky was

saying, is interested in doing.

The last that I would like to deal with is the list of references. There's a short bibliography in here. I'd like to draw your attention to two of the documents. I have one copy of each of them which are my office and working copies. The Report to the Ministry of Health on the Caregiver Information Support Link, which looks like this on the front cover, actually must be in here in the Legislature somewhere, because it was submitted to the Ministry of Health last February or March, thereabouts. It is a project which the ministry funded several years ago, and which continues to be funded. It provides us with some very good information about who the head-injured people are in the province of Ontario and the kinds of services they are using. We find this sort of document very useful in helping us to do service planning.

Included as appendices in this report are summaries of the hearings that were held by the Ontario Brain Injury Association, which is our provincial organization, hearings that they conducted in 1989 and 1984 — a very long title, but anyway, the status of wellness to do with people

with brain injuries.

The last document is called A Continuum of Opportunity for People in Ontario with Acquired Brain Injury. Produced originally two years ago, it did last summer receive endorsement from the long-term-care division of the Ministry of Health here in Ontario. It provides us

with a really good working tool as we and our fellow organizations in the business of dealing with people with head injuries go about our job of planning services not just at the local level, but also across the whole province. If you're not able to acquire these documents, let me know; I can certainly direct you to where they are.

As Dr Lazosky was talking, and as I thought about her presentation, it seemed to me that the issues we're dealing with cut across several ministries. It's not just health — it's education, it's community and social services, it may be citizenship and so on — so it seems appropriate that we were invited to appear before this committee, which deals with a number of these different ministries. Thank you very much for having us come.

Ms Lankin: I appreciate your presentation. One comment: I think you're being polite when you thank the government for passing the bicycle helmet legislation that had been proposed by Mrs Cunningham, whom I know your association has a good relationship with.

Mr Davies: She's one of our valued members.

Ms Lankin: I remember very well being the Minister of Health at the time and fighting to get support in our caucus. There was resistance, of course, but that was there and supported and, including adults, would have gone forward. Unfortunately, this government has stepped back from that in terms of what it has passed. I for one still remain a very strong advocate of Dianne's original legislation from a prevention point of view. I was very convinced by all in the field that it would make an important contribution.

Î was interested in the questions that you raised around repatriation, again particularly because when I became Minister of Health I was dealing with a family in my own community who had a relative down in the United States. It's similar to one of the earlier presentations that we had where individualized funding would have seemed to be the transitional approach that would have helped that family to gain the services, as well as the point she raised around certification of services and developing the expertise, because it was pretty thin here in Ontario. I think McMaster and other areas were starting to develop a much better level of expertise of treatment.

Do you have any thoughts of what the key next critical steps are going to be to ensure that repatriation can work and that the network of services is equitable across the

province, and accessible?

Mr Davies: A lot of thinking ahead, because certainly the number of people in the official announcement that came through a year ago December, I think it was, was small — they were 70 or something of that order — in relation to the 12,000-odd people in Ontario every year. They are a very small number of people, but they have had incredible needs in terms of their behaviour and so

Thinking ahead in terms of who's going to look after them when they get here, are the places going to be available if they're young enough to want to deal with educational concerns? Will they be there in the proper format? Will they have housing? Will they have transportation? Will they have some effective daytime — I'll use the word "clubhouse"; it's a technical word in our work, but it's a type of proposal that allows people to develop

some meaningful day-to-day daily activities if they aren't gainfully employed, and most of these people won't be. I think there's a lot of forethought involved.

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): It's my understanding from some of the research I've done before you came that the province spends approximately \$33 million on people with acquired brain injury and then spends money through OHIP and doctors and things that are very difficult to tie into one group or another. I know that one of the reinvestments we've made since the election has been to put money into repatriation. It's my understanding that we had approximately 100 people who had to go to the States to have services because services weren't available here and that the government has put some money together to try and bring them back to Ontario.

The question I want to ask is about the quality of life for the people who have come back to Ontario, what that's meant to their families and their friends as they have come back into the province, because I've heard through my travels that there have been some pretty substantial family hardships and that by reinvesting in this area, in effect, the province has made it easier for families. Can you comment on the quality of life and the issues that have affected the 25 who have been repatriated, and I guess another 25 next year?

Mr Davies: I must say I don't know of any of the 25 who have been repatriated or who are coming back next year, but in the past, even before this announcement was made, I can think of at least three people just off the top of my head, I think including the person who wrote the cover story on this newsletter you've got here, who have been down to the States, far away, to Michigan and beyond or California, Texas, and it certainly was very difficult on families. You could not keep up the type of family contact that encourages the emotional recovery to health again, never mind the physical part of it.

Dr Lazosky: I guess the main thing is what they are coming back to. That was the main hardship, that if they were sent away for their treatment and nothing was done in the home community, no resources were developed in the home community, then they came from a great system in the States, say a farm-type concept in Texas for behavioural management, and they come back home. I guess that's the main issue I hear all the time. The one issue is. what are they coming back to? The second issue I hear a lot from families is: "I chose not to have my child go to the United States. I chose to sell my house, build a new one, do everything to keep them home. Why aren't we getting money to help now? These people coming back will have additional money, but my child won't have any additional money, and all our funding has run out." 1710

The Chair: Mr Gravelle — Ms McLeod?

Mrs McLeod: I'll lead off and then there may be a few moments for my colleague.

I'm obviously really concerned about the lack of services available for those who have brain injuries. The repatriation question that Ms Lankin has asked is a critical one, but also the lack of services for the 3,000 individuals a year who may need some support because they can't return to their way of life is a concern. It

becomes an even greater concern as we see more and more the responsibilities for social housing, for transportation, all those, shifted to the municipalities, and vou've noted that in your brief.

We only have three minutes, so I'm going to try to focus on one question in particular. You mentioned that many of the people you would be working with would run out of their own private funding support to be able to provide their services and would need public support. On the whole question of redefinition of the disabled, an earlier presenter said they understood that the restructuring for disabled programs was really a done deal, without a lot of consultation.

The issue of redefining the disabled, if that is part of restructuring, would have to be a concern for those who are dealing with head injuries because of the fuzziness, the lack of clarity of the definition of what constitutes a brain-injured individual. Could you just comment on that whole issue of definition and how it might affect the people you work with?

Mr Davies: I'm smiling because you use the word "fuzziness," and that's hit the nail on the head. It really is fuzzy. But as I heard a psychologist, I think he was, about a year ago say, the brain is not a knee. As Dr Lazosky has said, it's really very difficult to try to figure out which one of the combination of billions and billions of neurons and cells and this and that which fly around in the brain has been injured.

It's becoming clear to me, after being in my position for almost three years now, that people with brain injury need to be included among all the rest of those who have very visible disabilities, because the cognitive disability really does a lot for changing who a person is. Without any disrespect whatsoever, and I don't know if anyone is in the room who uses a white cane, who uses a hearing aid, who wears glasses, who uses a wheelchair, who uses a cane or crutches or a walker or whatever, you can see all that and you can react and you can do whatever, but you can't necessarily see the person with a brain injury, yet they have as much of a disability as anybody else.

Dr Lazosky: An impact I've seen is, if I see somebody who has had a brain injury in a motor vehicle accident, they can get hooked into services that are specifically ministry funded or privately funded. Then I have somebody, a young man with a brain tumour, who's trying to go back to finish off his OAC level, has plans for university, and there's no funded rehab available for him through the public system. There is through the private system if you have the money, but the money is a lot.

I'm constantly trying to scramble to get people to do pro bono work or look for unique ways to get people some services to help them along. But to look at the person's face and say: "Okay, I've done the neuropsychological assessment. Now what?" sometimes I have to say: "Well, I'm not sure. Let's see if we can work something out. We'll make some phone calls, but this is the way the system is."

The Chair: I'm sorry, your time is up. Thank you very much for your presentation and for coming all the way down to be with us this afternoon. It was a very interesting presentation.

#### PATRICIA SPINDEL

The Chair: Next we have Patricia Spindel. Welcome to the hearings. You've been sitting here for a while, so I guess you know the procedure. Please state your name and begin your presentation. Thank you for coming.

**Dr Patricia Spindel:** My name is Patricia Spindel. I believe you have in front of you a submission I brought. That's going to provide some additional information to supplement the remarks I'm going to make to you today.

First of all, I appreciate very much the opportunity to speak with the committee today on a subject which greatly concerns me: funding cuts to people with disabilities. I am speaking to you today as a citizen, a taxpayer and as someone who has for many years tried to assist older adults living in nursing homes and people with developmental disabilities and their families to improve

the quality of their lives.

For eight years I was a staff person with the Ontario Association for Community Living and for six years I worked as a volunteer with an organization called Concerned Friends of Ontario Citizens in Care Facilities. Today I spend a lot of my time trying to help people with developmental disabilities and their families who are struggling just to get by, and I think that's a tragedy. I am here because in almost 25 years of doing both professional and volunteer work in this area I have never seen the pain, heartache, anxiety and fear that I am seeing today. I don't think the people making the decisions in this government know what kind of pain they're causing to other people; at least I hope it's just that they do not know.

I want to focus today on three things: cuts to direct services for people with developmental disabilities, cuts which have occurred in special services at home funding to people with developmental disabilities and their families as a side-effect of government policy decisions, and the humiliating and dehumanizing way that people who have spent their lives caring for people with disabilities have been treated by government in the past year or more

because of these funding cuts.

None of you, as legislators, entered public service so that you could do harm to people who are unable to care for themselves and to those who care for them. None of you, I hope, intend to create fear and anxiety in people who are already struggling with physical, developmental and psychiatric disabilities. Yet, sadly, that is what is happening in this province because of the policies of this government and because of some of the policies which were introduced by the previous government. As legislators, you have a responsibility to assess what the impact of your policies will be before you make those policies, not after you have made them, as is now occurring at this committee. Nevertheless, action taken to reverse a bad decision can be positive, and I am here today to ask that you reverse some of the bad decisions which have been made in the past year or more.

Cutting funding to already underfunded direct services to people with developmental disabilities — that's a term formerly referred to as mental retardation — by 6% is a bad decision. There have been waiting lists of eight to 10 years for group homes in many communities for a long

time. Those waiting lists are getting longer now. Many people on those waiting lists are receiving no government assistance at all.

Cutting funding to community mental health agencies by 2% and then by 3% was a bad decision. It is leaving those agencies struggling to meet the needs of people with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and a range of other mental health problems. It signals the end of any possible cooperation between those organizations and developmental services agencies which are trying to address the needs of people with dual diagnosis. I am now referring to developmental disability and psychiatric diagnosis.

Some front-line developmental service agencies are now operating with only one staff person per shift in their group homes, placing their clients and workers at risk because of inadequate levels of funding. Operating group homes with people who have returned from institutions and have very complex needs as a result of their institutionalization with these low staffing levels is a tragedy waiting to happen. What is shocking is that the Ministry of Community and Social Services seems not to want to know anything about this. They tell me they do not know what staffing levels are in group homes in the developmental services system, which is funded by their own ministry, and they seem to be taking no steps to find out.

Here in Toronto some non-profit agencies have told the ministry that they cannot continue to relocate people with very complex needs to the community from downsized and closed institutions unless they have appropriate levels of funding to match the people's needs. I believe you've heard from the MARC group at this committee. That is a responsible position to take under the circumstances, but these same service providers were told by ministry staff, "If you can't do it cheaply enough, we'll go to the private sector." That is irresponsible behaviour on the part of the ministry, and it borders on abuse of power by government. It also ignores the funding realities that these agencies have been trying to bring to the government's attention.

You cannot provide appropriate service to a person who has come from an institution where he or she has acquired self-abusive or other maladaptive behaviours which have resulted in his or her need to be under constant supervision on \$56,000 or less per year, yet that is what government is now prepared to pay in per diems, the person's needs notwithstanding.

Funding developmental service agencies too low is also causing the labour strife which we're currently seeing at the Metro Toronto Association for Community Living and at two other organizations serving people with developmental disabilities and autism in the Ottawa area where workers have been locked out by their employers after only three hours of bargaining and replaced by contract workers. These are not simple labour disputes which are somehow separate from provincial government policies and priorities. It is this government's downsizing, cost-cutting and restructuring agenda which is leading to these disputes, and that too is irresponsible behaviour on the part of the government.

The people caught in the middle of these labour disputes are people with autism and people with develop-

mental disabilities. They and their parents do not understand why their worlds are being turned upside down. Their parents have told me how afraid they are of what is happening to their sons and daughters and of how afraid they are to complain because they might lose their spaces. They know they would have to wait another six to 10 years to get any comparable service for their loved ones and so they're forced to put up with poor service. Who of us would want that for our sons and daughters? And if it's not all right for our sons and daughters to have substandard vocational assistance or substandard living accommodations, then why is it all right for people with developmental disabilities and autism?

The fact is that there's something wrong with the government's priorities when it cuts funding to agencies providing support to disabled people which are paying their staff under \$28,000 per year at the same time as it increases the salaries of senior government bureaucrats who are making these irresponsible cuts at the government's bidding. Many senior ministry staff are making over three and a half times what front-line staff people are making. That is the result of misguided priorities on government's part, not lack of funding.

There's something wrong in this province when one doctor makes as much per year as 12 or more front-line staff people working in associations for community living. The province has settled with the doctors and yet it is demanding through its transfer payment agencies more and more wage and benefit concessions from front-line staff making less than a tenth of what a doctor makes. Why?

Is it because this government cares so little about the quality of service and support that people with developmental disabilities get that it does not care who looks after them? If that is not true, then reverse the 6% cut to agencies serving these individuals. Give back the \$50.4 million that has been cut from these organizations in the past three years. Give back the over \$30 million that this government has cut in the past year alone.

The minister keeps saying that she has not made cuts to the special services at home program, a program which provides individualized funding to families caring for people with developmental disabilities at home. Yet families all over this province have been calling and telling me that their funding has been cut, in some instances by 50% to 60%. These families were getting the bare minimum in support to begin with and now they have half or less. Why?

Because the minister and her senior bureaucrats, probably the same ones who are now getting \$40,000 a year more, thanks to Mr Eves's generosity, had decided that no more money could be added to that program in spite of the government's stated support for individualized funding during the election. Because the same amount of money had to be stretched to serve more people, they thought, the result was severe cuts to some families in order to serve other families as families were pitted against families in their quest for scarce resources. It would be difficult to think of a more demeaning approach to funding families than this.

We have yet to learn whether or not the very recent announcement of more funding for special services at home will reinstate the funds which have been cut from these families or simply attempt to address the long waiting lists for special services at home. There's no doubt that the minister's recent announcement will help some families and that it was a good beginning, but \$6 million is not nearly enough to end the desperation that many of the families who have been cut feel.

In some cases last year area offices overspent in the special services at home program by almost \$1 million. This year they've been held strictly to their funding targets. Because of this, families in those areas where MCSS area offices overspent last year have been cut this year as area offices attempt to meet their budget targets.

While the minister consoles herself with the idea that she has not made cuts to this program and that she has thrown a few dollars at the problem, many families are reeling from the very real cuts that have been made to them. It trivializes their plight every time the minister says that she has not made any cuts and it trivializes their plight to distribute what amounts to \$500,000 or less to each area office when the minister knows that the very real needs of these families are not being met. You will by now have heard at this committee what kind of personal impact that has had on some of these families, and I can tell you it's just the tip of the iceberg.

Now the government wants to change the definition of "disability" to those most in need. Families which have received special services at home support for years are now in a position where they could be bumped by another family which the government considers to be more in need. They have received no assurances from the ministry that this will not happen. Once again, a policy like this will pit families against families. The government is playing a very dangerous game with people's lives.

When you compare how little most families get in funding to care for their loved ones at home to what government would be spending if those same people were in residential care, it is easy to see that these families are saving taxpayers millions and millions of dollars per year. For their caring and compassion these families have been told that the pittance they have received has already been cut or may be in jeopardy. Why?

If this government cared at all about these families, it would quadruple the funding to this program immediately and recognize it for what it is, a bargain, and would recognize these families for what they are, gifts to taxpayers like me. These families are models of what every person in Ontario should be: caring, committed people who understand that investment in others is never misplaced investment and that it is far more precious than investment in commodities.

So why is this government not supporting these families better? Why can it find millions to settle with the doctors and pay its senior bureaucrats more, why can it find millions to continue to support an outdated, decentralized area office structure in the Ministry of Community and Social Services which costs taxpayers almost \$173 million a year, and why can it find billions for a tax cut, but cannot find \$25 million more for families and cannot put back the \$50 million that was taken from the developmental services system? Why?

Could it be that this government does not have its priorities straight, that it cares so little about the plight of these families that it patronizes them here at this committee with false whining about a deficit that is not an issue when other priorities like doctors' salaries and tax cuts are on the table? If not, then now is the time to do something about it.

The government may think that these cuts are common sense, but many taxpayers like me see them as an absence of common decency on the part of this cabinet. Do the right thing and put the \$50.4 million back into the developmental service system and do what you said you would do and increase dramatically the funding for special services at home and individualized funding.

The government has tried to convince taxpayers like me that its policies are deficit-cutting policies, it has tried to convince people like me that it needs to cut jobs to create jobs, that it needs to cut services to people to preserve services to people, but the facts do not align

with the government's rhetoric.

The facts are that this government is not busy cutting the deficit. Giving more money to doctors does not cut the deficit. Paying senior bureaucrats more does not cut the deficit. Giving out tax cuts does not cut the deficit. Maintaining unwieldy, decentralized bureaucratic structures in the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Community and Social Services which are costly and not accountable to the public does not cut the deficit. None of these things cuts the deficit, and yet these seem to be the government's priorities.

Where is the Conservatives' legendary management expertise when you are unable to rein in an unwieldy bureaucracy in the Ministry of Community and Social Services that continues to maintain itself in the style to which it has grown accustomed at the expense of direct services to people with disabilities? It gives you bad advice and it gets you into political hot water repeatedly because of ill-advised policy decisions. The government of Bill Davis would not have stood for it. That government would not have made such deep cuts in funding to people with developmental disabilities, deficit or no deficit.

The tax cut is a campaign promise Mr Harris says he is determined not to break. Yet he has broken his promise not to cut services and supports to people with developmental disabilities as if they somehow do not matter as much as taxpayers like me. Well, they do matter just as much.

Taxpayers like me who also care about other people, who do not enjoy some of the advantages and the privileges that I do, like good health, a mind that works well most of the time, arms and legs that get me where I want to go and a reasonably decent income, would rather see this government balance its economic cost-cutting zeal with some social responsibility. I would rather see this government get its priorities straight and inject some common decency into its political agenda.

You can find the millions to do so by dismantling the area offices in the Ministry of Community and Social Services and returning to a more efficient, centralized system of administration where you can at least track

where the money goes. There are tens of millions of dollars in savings sitting right there which could be redirected to families who need that money. With all the disentanglement going on, there won't be much left to administer anyway.

Then you can tell your senior bureaucrats that there are others in this province who need the money more, people like the ones who have appeared before this committee — Veronica Manuel from Thunder Bay and Irene Phelps from Durham region — and take back those big pay increases. You could ask the doctors and some of the other high-income earners and corporate officials who have supported your political campaigns if they would care to make donations to the programs and services for people with disabilities, which are on their last legs right now thanks to your policies. Finally, you can cut the tax cut, reinvest the money in the services to people with disabilities which you have cut and don't break your promises to them. They deserve at least equal treatment with taxpayers like me.

That would end the humiliation that families of people with developmental disabilities face when they have to fill out forms which ask demeaning questions that reduce them to the status of beggars, and they have to reapply every six months for the pittance they receive. That would further ease the anxiety of older parents struggling to find resources for their loved ones before they die and that would also help to ease the minds of people with disabilities living in group homes who do not have

enough people to look after them right now.

This government has shown over and over again how ruthless it can be. Is it destined to forever sing that one-note tune or can it also show that it can be compassionate and fairminded and govern for all of the people of Ontario, not just those who are well organized and who have wealth and influence and who are able-bodied? It will be by your actions, not your rhetoric or your expensive TV ads, that you will be judged by taxpayers like me when the next election comes.

It may come as a surprise to you to learn that I will not be judging you on whether or not you gave me a tax cut, and neither will my neighbours or friends. I will be judging you on whether or not my elderly neighbours can get the help they need, and whether my friends' sons and daughters who have developmental disabilities are getting the support they need to continue to live in their own communities. I will be voting for a government that balances the need for fiscal responsibility with compassion and a sense of common decency.

Thank you, and I'd be happy to answer any questions. Mr John L. Parker (York East): Thank you very much for your presentation this afternoon. Thank you in particular for combining your expression of concern with a few concrete recommendations. I appreciate that. Actually, I'd like to follow up on one of your recommendations because we're in an area where I have probably less exposure to the field than you have, and you might be able to provide me with some guidance. You had some particular recommendations for how the Ministry of Community and Social Services might restructure itself to serve people better and save money for the taxpayer. Can you help us out with some more detail on that?

**Dr Spindel:** I can tell you that years and years ago, I guess before 1982, the ministry was much more centralized than it is now. We found that removed a layer of bureaucracy between the decision-makers and the people who were living with the decisions those decision-makers had made. I think that's a more reasonable approach. When they went to the 12 area offices, that inserted that additional layer of bureaucracy. I don't believe this ministry needs 12 area offices to administer what is a diminishing budget at this point. Even if you went to a regional office structure so you eliminated a lot of existing administrative costs, that would make more sense.

Personally, I think you might be better off centralizing in that ministry because there's been so much difficulty for so long with trying to track where the money goes. I don't think many people at the central ministry level actually know where all the dollars are being spent in that ministry, and so having less bureaucracy out there in the field would probably be helpful in tracking the dollars and also in assessing and tracking the needs that are out there.

It would make sense to me to have someone from the central ministry go out to various areas three or four times a year and actually meet with people who are receiving services and with service providers and make their own assessments about what the needs seem to be than to be having this sort of decentralized structure where much of the information from the front line never gets to the central decision-makers anyway.

Mr Parker: We often get the message that you need those regional offices, those local offices, because they're closest to the people and they can deal immediately with the local needs, the local concerns, and that's how you

get a more direct, accountable service.

**Dr Spindel:** I know you're being told that, and I've heard that said over many years, but I think you've heard from some of the people who've been dealing with those local and regional offices, and that certainly is not their perspective. I know that some people in some parts of the province have a good relationship with some people in their local offices, but generally speaking my experience in talking with parents and service providers has been that this is not necessarily the case at all. I think the same thing could be achieved if you had people coming out locally to those areas three times a year and talking to people — the decision-makers, the ones who are actually making those decisions at Queen's Park.

Some of you may remember Dorothea Crittenden, who was the first woman deputy minister in Ontario and probably in Canada. She served under the Davis government. One of the things she did repeatedly was something that deputy ministers nowadays don't do any more: She went out and looked at what was going on, looked at the services that the ministry funded. Frankly, I think she made some very good decisions because she went out and saw for herself exactly what was going on.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): Thank you very much, Dr Spindel. That was really a very moving presentation. You hit a lot of buttons. It's almost more of a comment because I think you really summed everything up very well. Certainly you made reference to the fact that you didn't think the government members probably realized the pain they were causing in terms of families.

Dr Spindel: I don't think they do.

Mr Gravelle: At least you hoped they didn't, because if so, it would be pretty frightening. The purpose of this committee, obviously, is to study the impact of the government cuts, and there have been more as a result of the announcements more recently, but I hope that we can reach some conclusions. Your recommendations are much appreciated.

There will be an opportunity for this committee at the end of the hearings to put together some recommendations, and I hope the government members have been listening to your presentation and to the others that have gone on last week and this week because there will be an opportunity to hopefully correct some of those things. I trust they would do that. I just wanted to thank you very much for coming here and I'll pass you on to Mrs McLeod.

Mrs McLeod: Just a couple of questions: You're obviously very aware of what's happening in the field. Do you hear any rumours or have any sense of some of the changes to the bureaucracy that might be pending? For example, as the community care access committees are set up for managing long-term care, would it be your sense that they will also be assigned the responsibility of any funding, even the special services at home funding that community and social services is now doing?

Dr Spindel: We haven't been able to confirm anything because it's not easy to get information out of the government these days, so anything I would tell you would just be rumours anyway. There are rumours going both ways. There are rumours that say developmental services will stay with the Ministry of Community and Social Services; there are rumours that say it's going to be transferred over to the Ministry of Health, and that could possibly result in that funding being administered by community care access centres. I've heard both, but I'm not able to confirm either one because we can't seem to get access to that information.

Ms Lankin: It's good to see you again. Two questions: Let me just follow up, first of all, on Mrs McLeod's question to you. It is of great concern to us as we see the money for long-term care, \$1.6 billion or so, being shifted out of the Ministry of Health down on to municipalities and we hear the government say, "But we're going to maintain \$17.4 billion in our health budget." We've been unable to get a clear answer of whether or not that means they're simply going to show some kinds of transfer payment arrangements with the municipalities or whether that money would appear to be an increase in health spending or whether portions of other ministries without their budgets are going to be transferred into that funding envelope.

There have been times in the past where services to persons with disabilities had been funded through the Ministry of Health. I'm sure you will remember some of the transfers over to Comsoc, and I remember the whole debate about health versus Comsoc in terms of long-term care. They're very different cultures in these ministries,

as I found out.

Could you comment on the funding implications but also on the service ethic implications of shifting that back to health?

Dr Spindel: Actually, the shift came for developmental services and children's services in 1974. That was after the Williston report in which two people with developmental disabilities - one suffered frostbite, another one hanged himself - left one of the large institutions. It took tragedies for the government of the day to actually look at the need to shift people out of those large institutions, and they felt that the only way this could happen would be by shifting people from the hospital schools. which is what they were called then, which were administered by the Ministry of Health, into the Ministry of Community and Social Services. In fact that was a very positive initiative because that's how deinstitutionalization started; that's how community options were actually

The biomedical model, which dominates in the Ministry of Health, is a model that does not fit developmental disabilities because developmental disability is not an illness: it's a condition that people live with, and of course our society creates a lot of barriers for those people. But the fact is that this service is much better placed in the Ministry of Community and Social Services, as bad as it sometimes is, than it would be in the Ministry of Health because families do not want to deal with doctors and nurses and they don't want their children's conditions medicalized. They want people to be part of their communities, they want them to have full inclusion in their communities, and that isn't going to happen if people's conditions are medicalized.

The major concern, I think, that families have is avoiding that biomedical model. They don't want to be forced to use home care. They don't want to be forced to rely on the old-style institutions as they have in the past, because they've found that those systems have been totally unresponsive to their needs in many cases. That's why it's much better in the Ministry of Community and

Social Services.

I've heard the same rumours that there could be a shift over and that the dollars will not necessarily follow the people out of one ministry into the other. I've also heard those rumours persistently. But families raised very strong concerns about that. I know the family alliance put together a brief called Back to Purgatory, which described in very clear terms what that would mean for their sons and daughters.

Ms Lankin: Would it be possible for us to get a copy of that brief for the committee? Could you give us the

reference again?

Dr Spindel: Back to Purgatory. I can ask the family alliance to send one, sure.

The Chair: Dr Spindel, thank you very much for your presentation this afternoon. We appreciate it.

#### ONTARIO ADVOCACY COALITION

The Chair: Our final presenter for today is the Ontario Advocacy Coalition. Please come forward.

Ms Lankin: Mr Chair, I wonder if I might just give an advance apology to this group, many of whom I've met with before. It's good to see you again. At 6 o'clock I have to leave. I have a public forum across town that I'm speaking at tonight, just in terms of getting there in time. I will be sure to check the Hansard but I won't be able to stay to actually ask questions. My apologies.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Lankin.

First of all, welcome. Thank you for joining us today. We look forward to your presentation. I see that some of you have been here this afternoon, so you probably know the format. If you would identify yourselves for the purpose of Hansard before you make your presentation, we would appreciate it very much. Please proceed.

Ms Mae Harman: Thank you for the opportunity of

meeting with your committee this afternoon.

My name is Mae Harman. I'm the co-chair of the Ontario Advocacy Coalition, where I represent Canadian pensioners' concerns. With me are Patti Bregman, who is a lawyer with the Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped; Ruth Stoddart, who is a staff member for the Canadian Mental Health Association; and Jeannie Kippax, who is one of our individual members.

The Ontario Advocacy Coalition was created in October 1986, bringing together a number of organizations that shared a common objective of securing a publicly funded, independent advocacy system with a legislated mandate to support vulnerable adults in defending their rights and interests. The coalition emerged in response to reports of many instances of abuse and neglect of seniors and persons with disabilities in the province in the 1970s and 1980s. Several of these incidents resulted in extended hospitalization for the victims, and in some cases the deaths of the vulnerable adults, leading to inquests and criminal prosecutions, all of which represent a substantial expense to the taxpayer.

The formation of the coalition coincided with the appointment of a former Progressive Conservative member of Parliament, the late Father Sean O'Sullivan, to conduct a review of advocacy, which resulted in the publication of the report You've Got a Friend in 1987. That report recommended the kind of advocacy system we were hoping for.

As all members of this standing committee will be aware, the Advocacy Act was proclaimed into law in the spring of 1995 and repealed one year later. Our coalition worked hard on the development of that legislation and on the planning for the work of the Advocacy Commis-

sion for close to a decade.

One of the best and most innovative features of the Advocacy Act was that the governance of the advocacy system was placed in the hands of vulnerable people themselves rather than in the hands of a government bureaucracy. Regrettably the legislation was never given a chance to demonstrate how effective it might have heen.

With the demise of the Advocacy Act, our coalition took stock of its reason for being, and those reflections resulted in the document Fundamentals of Advocacy, which is appended to this brief.

Our coalition now consists of 51 organizations and six individuals. A sizeable majority of the membership is composed of individuals and groups which are or have as their members persons who are vulnerable because of their disabilities and/or advancing years.

You have copies of our brief and our recommendations. Ruth Stoddart is going to speak briefly to the proposed changes to social assistance.

Ms Ruth Stoddart: I'd like to speak a bit about income support for persons with disabilities. I realize this hasn't been addressed at any great length in our brief, but we believe it's important, so I'd like to talk a bit about it.

As far as the number of disabled Canadians, 1986 Stats Canada data indicate that about 2.8 million Canadians report having some sort of disability; 1988 data from Stats Canada also indicate that over 57% of disabled people who have at least some sort of income reported their income to be below \$10,000 a year; 1994 stats from the Ministry of Community and Social Services here in Ontario show that of over 326,000 households that were receiving family benefits allowance at that point in time, over 16% were receiving family benefits because of some sort of disability. This indicates that there is a large number of persons with disabilities in the province and that a lot of them are of low income and/or depend on some sort of government income support program.

What I'd like to address is the effects of changes to various income support programs and the cumulative effect that all these changes are going to have on people with disabilities. First of all, at the federal level, as this committee knows, talks with the federal government and the provinces are ongoing concerning changes to the Canada pension plan. Having attended hearings last year, I'm well aware that there is talk about changes to the CPP disability benefit, probably in the direction of decreasing it, tightening eligibility requirements and therefore lowering the number of people who are eligible.

The second thing that happened at the federal level last year was that what is now called the employment insurance program was changed to in effect penalize repeat users and have longer periods of eligibility requirements for people entering the system and re-entering the system. This change has a large effect on people with disabilities, particularly people with cyclic disabilities, who are able to work at some points in their lives and not at other points. If they're continually going in and out of an employment insurance system, they're going to be penalized for this, even though they are able to work at times and are quite willing to work.

The third change at the federal level has been the change in the Canada assistance plan to block funding to the provinces. There is a great concern among people with disabilities that this block funding has not been accompanied by enforceable national standards that will control how the provinces are going to spend block funding and a large fear that various provinces, if not various areas within provinces, will be providing different levels of incomes and supports to persons with disabilities.

At the provincial level, there were changes to workers' compensation legislation which have resulted in the denying of any claims for chronic stress, which, working for a mental health organization, was of great importance to our organization in particular and is also important to other people with disabilities.

The second large change is to general welfare assistance and family benefits allowance. We have obtained statistics that say approximately 40% of those presently on general welfare assistance indicate that they have some sort of disability, and a lot of these people are waiting to be assessed to get on to what's presently family benefits allowance. As this committee is aware, the Ministry of Community and Social Services is changing the social assistance program to be split into the Ontario Works program for people who are able to work and a program for persons with disabilities who are unable to work. I can't remember the last name I heard for it, but I think it was the Ontario income support program.

That program has caused a great deal of concern, and the Ministry of Community and Social Services has been holding hearings concerning various parts of the new program. Of particular concern to people has been what the definition of "disability" will be. There is a feeling in the community that the disability definition will be changed so as to disallow people who are currently eligible from receiving what are presently FBA benefits and forcing those people into what's now the GWA program, to become Ontario Works, and that people who are unable to work will in fact have to do some type of work.

Finally, as of last week's announcements from the government, the municipal government is involved with things. The GWA program is to be transferred, as is the new disability program, and costs shared 50-50 with the municipalities. In addition, social housing is to be transferred to the municipalities.

The large concern of the disabled community with these transfers, although we're not sure what form they're going to take or how they will be implemented, is that transferring things to the municipalities will fragment programs even further and result in larger inequities in various areas of the province, particularly in municipalities which don't have the funds available to provide supports for people with disabilities which the province has previously provided.

Overall then, what we believe needs to happen is that there should be a comprehensive study of all programs affecting people with disabilities, in particular income support programs, instead of slightly altering each program in isolation of the other one, because what happens when you alter each program in isolation of the other one is that costs get offloaded from one level of government to the other or within levels of government. We don't believe this sort of reform will be beneficial at all to people with disabilities in the long term.

**Ms Harman:** Thanks, Ruth. Patti Bregman now is going to talk about rights advice and the official guardian and trustee.

Ms Patti Bregman: I'm also going to step back for one minute. I'm not going to go through the first part of our brief, but I really want to urge you to both read the beginning of our brief and think about it.

One of the things that concerns us the most as we go around the province — and I've done a lot of speaking to groups as well as then take calls — is this notion that cuts are only about the bottom line. What we're seeing are not cuts that are that easily identified. It's not a matter of saying the global budget is cut. What you need

to think about is the impact on the people who are supposed to receive the services. When it gets down to the bottom line, the reality is that if the person who needs the services isn't getting the services they need or the services aren't going to the people in need, that is a cut to service and that is wasteful delivery of service.

We think that's more and more what we're seeing happen in this province, and you'll hear more about it next week from some other groups. The number of programs where services are not able to be delivered because other programs that are required as well are not in place is growing, which means you've got an enormous amount of waste out there and an enormous number of people doing without service. It's real. This is not

something that is political or otherwise.

I want to talk a bit about advocacy, because I think advocacy and the change is quite relevant in this context. Advocacy has always been talked about as this terrible adversarial thing. What we have always said and still believe is that advocacy is about preventing vulnerability. Right now in this province the systems in place to prevent vulnerability and therefore prevent injury, prevent death, prevent abuse, are gone. It's one thing to say you don't want the advocacy system and that you'll have another one. It's been 18 months; there is nothing in place. There has been no replacement for the system, and the other changes you made through Bill 19 are in the process of making life a lot worse. I will give you two areas where we're seeing serious problems - and I know some of you are, because fortunately many of your constituency offices call our office when you're having problems, and we have had calls from constituency offices about these problems.

One is the public guardian and trustee. With no advocacy system in place and volunteer agencies and institutions being forced to lay off the advocates — for example, social workers are being laid off in agencies and hospitals - people have nowhere to turn. So where do they go? They go to the public guardian and trustee, who is required by law to investigate allegations of abuse. They're not. I know the stats; I've seen them. They're investigating less than 50% of the cases that come to them. I've had calls from social work departments at institutions that know the law and know the system. They cannot get responses from the public guardian and trustee for very clear cases where their client is being abused. That's unconscionable, and that is because there are cutbacks to the public guardian and trustee and they're being told to prioritize.

There is absolutely no excuse for not responding to allegations of abuse. I don't know how you can possibly justify it, and I strongly urge you to do something about it before you're forced by an inquest to come to account. This is something, as I said, your constituency offices have called me about. It's not something we're hearing simply from families, although families are calling us. This is an enormous, very serious concern out there.

The other concern is rights advice. Many people didn't like the idea of rights advice, including many family groups. Well, I can tell you now, the tides have turned and those families, including some aligned with Friends of Schizophrenics, are now calling and saying: Where are

the advocates? Where are the rights advisers? In one case somebody's brother was moved from a community hospital to a provincial psych hospital without their being advised of that. He died in restraints. The family never knew he was there; no rights adviser ever knew he was there. He died from positional asphyxia, and they took eight months to get an inquest called because there are cutbacks to the coroner's office. These are really serious problems.

Fine, you've gotten rid of the Advocacy Act. We still think and strongly believe there is an absolutely critical role, even more so with cutbacks, of having some form of advocacy out there, with the knowledge that you have people who know what's happening, know the law and can respond in a timely manner and help people get what they want. The United States has recognized this and there is an advocacy office in every state, mandated by law. New Zealand has recently put into place a national advocacy system. The UK is putting in an advocacy system. Recent reports out of the US looking at managed care said the only way it will serve people with disabilities is with advocacy in place.

This isn't about being adversarial. This is making sure that those who can't be heard have some kind of voice.

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Ms Harman: On a more personal level I want to say that I grew up in a rural community during the Depression. We didn't have much by way of material things, but what we had, we shared. The prevailing community philosophy was the social gospel which later spawned many of our social programs. We believed in our role as our brother's keeper and we acted on it. If our neighbour needed help, we went to his assistance. Life is very different today in most communities, especially in large, urban, impersonal ones.

My colleagues in the seniors' organizations and many others are appalled by the current denigration of those who are the most vulnerable in our society: the old, the poor, the sick, the disabled, women and children. The prevailing practice of this government is to reward those who have made it financially and to punish by cuts in financial supports and services those who are unable to

take care of their own needs.

I have with me a copy of the diary kept by the daughters of Dorothy McKinnon during her horrendous two months in hospital. It is very doubtful that, without the continuous intervention of Mrs McKinnon's daughters, she would have survived. A similar story by Diane Mason appeared in the Globe and Mail on January 13. Dr Carolyn Bennett of Women's College Hospital warns: "Don't ever dream of sending someone to hospital on their own. The family should show up and do shifts. It's just safer." It follows that one should never go home from hospital unless there is someone there who is capable of monitoring your progress and providing appropriate care.

My next-door neighbour has no living relative in the world. Most of her friends have died or are in poor health. This is not an uncommon situation. Many people, especially seniors, have no one to whom they can turn to give care or to advocate on their behalf. The Advocacy

Act, which would have made advocates available if needed, was trashed by the government.

As more and more nurses and other qualified care providers are sacked and health services are curtailed, seniors and the disabled will suffer the most from lack of care. We will be the least valued and the lowest on the priority list. We probably don't need to worry about euthanasia just yet, but neglect and abuse will accomplish the same thing more painfully.

Jeannie Kippax has prepared a detailed report on roadblocks and frustrations she encounters in trying to get assistance in her daily living and she will speak to some of these

Ms Jeannie Kippax: I'm a disabled woman living independently in the community. I am wheelchair dependent for all mobility and the only support I now use is Meals on Wheels. The cutbacks I'm experiencing as a result of this government will soon force me on to home care and on to a homemaker.

I'd like to talk about one of the things we were told, that there would be no user fees: Copayments are the same thing. It's a fee I have to pay for my medication, \$2 per prescription. I get a 90-day supply, but with some pharmacists, if you get your medication every 30 days, they'll waive the \$2 and they get a dispensing fee every month. They win. So do we. We save good money, but that's against my ethics.

The drug benefit plan will pay for some medications but not for others. It will not pay for an EpiPen. That's a pre-loaded syringe with adrenalin for use in a life-threatening allergic reaction. I've had two. I was saved because somebody there had one. I cannot get one. I'm violently allergic to mosquito bites and bee stings. I can't afford it; I have to do without.

I require a peak flow meter; it's a thing you breathe into and it monitors how much air is in your lung. This will not only monitor my asthma but during my frequent colds it would monitor my lung function and we'd be able to prevent the many bouts of pneumonia I get.

The government will not pay for this, and so again I have to do without. However, the government is quite happy and quite willing to pay to send a registered nurse into my home up to four times a day, every day, so I can use the peak flow meter she's issued with. This doesn't make economical sense.

Similarly, the drug benefit plan now covers asthma medications in puffers and a thing called a spinhaler. You inhale and you don't have to puff. I can't use a puffer because of my disability, and I'm really concerned that in the cost-cutting measures, spinhalers will be seen as unnecessary. That would mean I would no longer have access to the asthma medication I've been on for the last seven years which has completely eliminated my need to have emergency trips to the hospital.

I'm also concerned about the choices the government elects to see as acceptable. For example, ODB will pay for pain medication including narcotics. I go to a pain support group. It's in a community health clinic and it's led by staff. This is not considered medical treatment, even though recommended by my physician. I don't get transportation assistance. But if I met one-on-one with the leader and did the same thing individually, privately,

which would be more expensive, social services would see that as medical treatment and they'd pay transportation.

I'm concerned also about the fact that Bill 26 gives the government the right to require that specific clinical criteria be met prior to approving coverage of a drug by ODB. I'm going to use the example of Imipramine, which is primarily classified as an anti-depressant but has many widely accepted universal uses. One of those is in a person with a spinal cord injury. This medication will help to control and in some cases prevent the urinary incontinence that results from that injury. In people with chronic pain, the same drug is used in very low doses. It will control pain, in many cases far better than narcotics. It is also used, in very small doses, to overcome the sleep disorder that is a part of the fibromyalgia syndrome.

I have to tell you that if this government legislates a criterion that means only the clinically depressed can have this drug paid for by the government, a lot of us are going to have a lot poorer quality of life and we're going to have a lot more medical problems.

I'd like to deal with two other things. One is that as a result of cutbacks in the hospitals, my occupational therapy has been cut. I used to go three or four times a year. OT has enabled me to learn to use assistive devices to be fully functional in all personal activities, to do all my cleaning, laundry and housekeeping, to manage my chronic fatigue so that I fully participate in my community, and in fact volunteer in a number of ways. Now that this has been cut, I will probably have to go on to home care because as I deteriorate physically I'm not going to have somebody to help me learn how to do those things.

The last thing I want to address is the fact that the government is considering saying that you can only have two medical consultations per condition. My experience with my spinal problem was that the first doctor I saw pushed my little toe down and said: "Yeah, you need surgery. How soon?" When I asked if that was really necessary, he said, "If you don't want surgery, you're wasting my time." Sure, he got paid for that. The second one told me to stand on my toes and my heels and then he said I should go see a psychiatrist and find out why I needed to have chronic pain.

If the government's criteria were in effect, that would be it. However, I was allowed to see a third doctor, a physiatrist, who specializes in diagnosing physical musculoskeletal problems. This man did a thorough history, a thorough physical, and ordered some tests, including a CAT scan. We found out I have central and lateral spinal stenosis, my discs had degenerated far worse than they would ever be expected to for a woman my age, and that I had severe osteoarthritis, and that as a result of that, I had permanently pinched nerves in my lower back.

It wasn't my overuse of the system that caused me to need a third consult. The government must recognize that not all doctors are equal. I ask you to consider the impact your cuts are having on my life. I've gone into more detail about others in my brief. It took me 40 hours to type it because of my limitations. I would ask that you please take the time to read it.

Ms Harman: What more would you like to hear? The Chair: We have about two and a half minutes, if

you want to summarize or if there are any questions.

Mrs McLeod: I think there would be a lot of questions. We only have a brief time. I want to thank all the members of the coalition for coming forward and making a presentation today. The other members may appreciate if I particularly thank Jeannie Kippax for the time she spent on the presentation and also for having been here I think to this point every day of the hearings. Given the fact it takes that extra effort for you to have been here, your commitment and your concern have been evident to all of us. I can assure you that we will not only give attention to the details of your presentation, but make sure that as many people as we can reach are also aware of them. Thank you very much for that.

If we have more than what will now probably be 30 seconds, I think we're going to have a lot of occasions to want to talk to you all about the role of advocacy as we start getting into this very strange situation of the new shared responsibility in long-term-care areas and the municipal responsibility for social housing. I know you can't even begin to answer if I were to say, how do we advocate for people who are going to try and meet social housing needs when there's no guarantee of rent-gearedto-income support left? We'll save that for another day.

Mr Shea: May I also thank the four of you for a presentation that was helpful, particularly helpful for me. A couple of observations: The Ontarians with Disabilities Act that you refer to on page 9, I think you'll be pleased to know that the commitment made by the government to deal with that in the first term is still being pursued, and within the economic goalposts that are being established it will certainly be brought forward, we hope, in this

The point raised by Ms Bregman — can I just refer to that for a moment? You caught my attention with the emphasis on the advocacy and there was a quote you used that really spoke to me. It was, "If the person isn't getting the service they need, that is a wasteful service." That really struck me because I think all of us here would totally agree with you. Therein hangs the great debate perhaps about the old Advocacy Act. It was interesting that immediately after you made your presentation on Bill 19, I think you were followed by the chair of the Advocacy Commission, David Reville, who brought forward an adequate figure of \$3 million that he thought would be appropriate, rather than the \$18 million that had been set aside by the last government. Indeed, \$3 million currently is in the budget, through the initiative for vulnerable adults and so forth.

I wanted to make that point very clear, because as I looked at the figures, I was astonished to see that in that last period of the government, \$5.1 million had been spent on advocacy, but \$3 million in excess of that just for salaries alone, which means that in essence something in the order of 7,200 telephone calls were dealt with, something ranging, then, at a cost per telephone call on the 1-800 line of \$715.29 a call. I raise that because I think you cut right to the chase when you give us that quote. I think that's exactly the sort of thing we have to wrestle with to ensure we get the right kind of service to the people who are seriously in need of it, and I appreciate that comment for us.

Ms Bregman: Can I just make one comment, not to disagree with you except to point out that you also have to make sure the service is there. The error made in deinstitutionalization, which was not making sure community services were there when you stopped, is the error that's been made in advocacy. I don't think anybody will object if you can do advocacy better, but 18 months later the money may be allocated but there is still no service available, there is still no abuse prevention program available and the public guardian and trustee has been cut. It weighs both ways, you may be right, but what we've asked and recommended at the end is that we want to see the actual plans, the time frame. That's how we want you to evaluate what you're doing.

Mr Shea: I think there's some merit in what you're saying, yet you also know that just a matter of days ago there was a major conference dealing with this very issue in which this government is trying to forge together the new stakeholders and shareholders in a new policy to help forge new services for those most vulnerable in this province.

The Chair: Thank you on behalf of the committee for the hard work you put into this and for being with us today and sharing your views. We appreciate it very

The committee is adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 3:30.

The committee adjourned at 1816.

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Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole L) for Mr Kennedy

Mr Gary Fox (Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings /

Prince Edward-Lennox-Hastings-Sud PC) for Mr Froese

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William L) for Mr Gerretsen

Mr John L. Parker (York East / -Est PC) for Mr Carroll

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea PC) for Mr Jordan

Clerk / Greffière: Ms Tonia Grannum

Staff / Personnel: Mr Ted Glenn, research officer, Legislative Research Service

1200



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# Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 28 January 1997

Standing committee on social development

Funding for persons with disabilities

# Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36e législature

## Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 28 janvier 1997

Comité permanent des affaires sociales

Subventions aux personnes handicapées



Présidente : Annamarie Castrilli Greffière : Tonia Grannum

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#### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Tuesday 28 January 1997

#### ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

#### COMITÉ PERMANENT DES AFFAIRES SOCIALES

Mardi 28 janvier 1997

The committee met at 1541 in room 151.

#### ELECTION OF CHAIR

Clerk of the Committee (Ms Tonia Grannum): Honourable members, it is my duty to call upon you to elect a Chair. Are there any nominations?

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I would nominate

Annamarie Castrilli.

Clerk of the Committee: Are there any further nominations? There being no further nominations, I declare Ms Annamarie Castrilli elected as Chair of the standing committee on social development.

#### **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

The Chair (Ms Annamarie Castrilli): Thank you so much. It's now my duty to call upon all of you to elect a Vice-Chair. May I have some nominations? I guess I will nominate Dwight Duncan. Any further nominations? Seeing none, I declare Mr Duncan elected Vice-Chair of the committee in his absence.

#### FUNDING FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Consideration of the designated matter pursuant to standing order 125 relating to the impact of the Conservative government's funding and funding cuts on persons with disabilities and their families.

The Chair: Thank you all very much. You've been having a very intense and interesting time over the last few weeks dealing with Mr Gravelle's 125 motion and I'm delighted to be able to continue on this very important topic.

#### L'ARCHE ONTARIO

The Chair: Our first group today is L'Arche Ontario. Peggy Keaney, executive director, and Joe Egan, director of support services, are here. Welcome. You have one half-hour for your presentation, and if you leave any time we'll be happy to ask you some questions.

Ms Peggy Keaney: I hope that we'll continue to keep your interest on this topic today. Thank you for the opportunity of addressing you. If you would indulge me for a few minutes, I will give you a little bit of background as to what L'Arche is, because I think we're a well-kept secret.

Jean Vanier, a Canadian, began L'Arche in 1964 in France. Today L'Arche is an international organization of over 30 communities in 100 countries. In Ontario we have eight L'Arche communities, the largest representa-

tion by a province in Canada. We service over 200 people and have done so since our inception in 1969.

L'Arche is a residential placement for people with disabilities that is unique. In each locale where we are situated we form a community with the persons who have a disability and their assistants or, in other words, staff. We come together to live under the same roof and create home. Relationships of mutuality are fostered based on respect and caring, in keeping with Christian values. L'Arche is a non-denominational organization and welcomes people from a variety of faith groups and cultures.

As we are an international organization, we have a charter that all communities, no matter what country, adhere to. I would like to just take a moment to highlight a couple of the aims of our organization.

First, the aim of L'Arche is to create communities which welcome people with a developmental disability. By this means, L'Arche seeks to respond to the distress of those who are too often rejected and give them a valid place in society.

In addition, L'Arche knows that it cannot welcome everyone who has a developmental disability. It seeks to offer not a solution but a sign, a sign that a society, to be truly human, must be founded on welcome and respect for the weak, marginalized and those who need support.

Whatever their strengths or limitations, people are all bound together in a common humanity. Everyone is of unique value and everyone has the same rights. The fundamental rights of each person include the right to life, to care, to a home, to a faith life, to education and to work

As a provincial organization, L'Arche Ontario participates in the minister's advisory committee and represents the interests of individuals and families with similar objectives. Due to its unique characteristics of blending professionalism, life-sharing and spirituality, it is very difficult to conceive that the same respect for differences could be achieved if all service providers in one area were combined under a single governance model. This model is being proposed in some parts of our province as we speak.

As an organization, L'Arche Ontario has a fundamental objection to the funding cuts for individuals who are developmentally disabled. Current spending reductions are not welcomed in general because of the already existing unmet needs in our local communities and, more specifically, because across-the-board cuts penalize those organizations and families that are operating efficiently while those that are not doing so are not held accountable for their financial practices.

L'Arche is committed to being an active participant, both locally and provincially, in reviewing how this sector can better deploy its resources. While we are committed to the principle of doing more with less and are already implementing this standard, we want to focus your attention this afternoon on three basic issues and recommendations.

The first issue: The importance and place of faith/cultural groups as service providers. Canada and Ontario are a mosaic of cultures and faiths. There is a long history of organizations providing services to people with a disability within specific faith and cultural communities. The government must continue to provide choices and options that understand and respond to such diversity.

Thousands of individuals and their families clearly want the continued involvement of religious and culturally based organizations in the delivery of human services because they feel it is important to receive support within the framework of a particular set of values and beliefs. They believe this does have an impact on the quality of life of a person with a disability.

Furthermore, it makes good business sense to continue to support the delivery of social services through religious/cultural organizations. Such affiliations allow access to millions of dollars in charitable giving and countless hours of volunteer work, including the commitment of active, local board members.

Our recommendation to the government would be that the government and ministry make a clear policy statement that supports the continued presence of faith-based and cultural organizations in the delivery of social services to people with disabilities so that their choices, beliefs and values are respected.

Mr Joe Egan: The second issue we'd like to bring to your attention is around the reality of the unmet needs of people with a developmental disability and their families who are living in the community today. L'Arche Ontario fully supports the government's recent initiative, which began in the 1980s, to continue to eliminate all institutions for people with a developmental disability. However, this does not address the negative impact of recent cutbacks for individuals and their families already living in local communities.

We are in touch with many families through the eight communities we have in Ontario and it is our sense that many of these families have lost hope. You've probably heard from some of these individuals directly yourselves. For example, aging parents face considerable and growing anxiety about the adult children for whom they have made huge sacrifices to keep at home rather than place in an institution. These parents have a growing inability to meet their adult children's needs and, understandably, also have fears of what will happen to their children as they become more incapacitated and after they die.

There are similar unmet needs regarding people with a disability in the communities: young adults who are leaving the education system, people with a dual diagnosis, early intervention for infants and young children with disabilities, to name just a few.

The proposed Ministry principle of serving "the most in need" is of grave concern to most families and service providers. If this principle is used as the foundation for the emerging social services system, there will be untold problems and a continuance of unmet needs of those determined — by whom we don't know yet — as not being most in need.

Our recommendations would be that the ministry develop and implement a standardized tool which measures the level of support or service needed by an individual for use across the province and that family and organizational subsidies be adjusted and reallocated as appropriate; that the ministry find and promote best practices and reward them by building in incentives to reduce costs; and that the government and ministry make a clear public commitment to reinvest in the developmental sector all dollars generated by facility closures in order to continue to address these unmet needs of individuals and families in the community.

In this regard, under the current closures the ministry has identified over \$13 million for reinvestment, but has not yet committed this money to our sector. Given these unmet needs, we find that this is unacceptable.

The third issue has to do with individual approaches. The present reality of financial constraints has necessitated a review and revisioning of the current social service system. We all know some savings are possible and current resources can be better deployed.

In particular, L'Arche Ontario strongly holds the position that the time has come for a fundamental paradigm shift in how the social service system is structured. The time has come to give much more control to individuals and families to make choices as they see fit in order to meet the support needs of people with a disability. Specifically, individualized funding and contracting for services is overwhelmingly the preferable option for families and organizations rather than a forced amalgamation of service providers as the basic way to restructure a new system. If consumers were empowered with the money and the ability to choose to contract directly for service from accredited providers, the current inefficiencies of the system would correct themselves.

Our recommendation is that based on the outcomes of the current pilot projects concerning individualized approaches to funding and contracting, the government and ministry make a fundamental policy commitment to the principle and implementation of individualized funding and contracting for services as the best way of ensuring choice and involvement for individuals and their families and of ensuring an effective, efficient service system.

This concludes our remarks. We want to thank you again for the opportunity to express these issues and recommendations to you, and in the time remaining we're happy to answer your questions and have a dialogue.

Mrs McLeod: I have a number of questions. I would like to be able to benefit from both your presentation and from your knowledge of the area and your experience in the community, as well as being on the advisory committee. You've raised a number of issues which, although there have been some allusions from previous presenters, haven't been perhaps set out quite as clearly as you do here; for example, your comments on the second page about the service providers in one area being combined under a single governance model and the fact that those

are proposals being considered as we speak. Could you say a little bit more about the nature of the single governance model and who's proposing it, where you think that

whole initiative is going?

Ms Keaney: There is one of the area offices in our province that has concluded that a single governance model would be a less expensive model to fund, so they have gone ahead and made a very lengthy proposal to go in this direction. This was proceeding at quite a rapid speed and my understanding is that it's being halted at the moment because of the knowledge — when it reached the level of Queen's Park, there was some objection to it because we would be creating another level of bureaucracy. We would have a board that would be a superboard with less hands-on involvement in the actual lives of people with disabilities and making some major decisions for them at this far-off place.

Also, coupled with that would be a watering down of the variety of agencies that would exist. Although there might be some work that can be done in terms of bringing together some shared services administratively and so on, we really believe that the right of people to express their choice in determining what kind of service they choose should be theirs and that we shouldn't become a

superagency in one locale.

Mrs McLeod: So the model that was proposed did not preclude individualized funding but it wasn't based exclusively on individualized funding then?

Ms Keaney: It wasn't even addressing individualized

runaing.

Mrs McLeod: So it would have been a governance model based on essentially a single governance of all existing facility-based care.

Have you heard any rumours even that a superagency or a local community single governance agency could be either the long-term-care agency that's to be set up or the community care access centres that are being established?

Ms Keaney: I've heard rumours of that. I don't know

if that's accurate.

Mrs McLeod: That isn't then necessarily the direction of the single governance model that you're referring to?

Ms Keaney: No.

Mrs McLeod: I'm not sure how much time there is. If you're sitting with a question, don't hesitate to step in. I'm wondering what your funding is and what cuts you — I assume you do get government subsidies.

Ms Keaney: Yes, we do.

Mrs McLeod: And you've had, what, the 5% funding cut that you've had to cope with, or is it beyond that?

Mr Egan: It was 2.5% and then 5% for a total of 7.5%.

Mrs McLeod: How has that affected your capacity to

meet the needs of your own residents?

Mr Egan: I think in general it obviously makes it more difficult. We're all stretched to do more with less and we have attempted to do that. Nobody who was receiving service before those cuts is not receiving service today, but certainly we can't do as much as we could before. I think for a number of agencies, depending on their funding base, this has really pushed them to the edge. So any further approach of funding cuts across the

board I think would put particularly some of the smaller agencies in danger of survival.

Mrs McLeod: Have you had an increase in need because of the deinstitutionalization? You mentioned specifically your belief that the government should commit the dollars that are realized from deinstitutionalization into the communities that are providing the service. Do you have any idea what that amount would be?

Mr Egan: I think the ministry has identified over \$13 million that would be available for reinvestment in the community after the people coming out of the institutions were placed appropriately in the community. Right now, I believe the figure is an average of some \$55,000 per person that would come with the person from the institu-

tion into the community.

Today it costs more than that to keep them in an institution, so there is going to be some surplus money that could be reinvested in the community, but at this point, as far as we know, that money hasn't been committed for the developmental services sector. It has been allocated for reinvestment in a general sense in social services but not particularly for our sector, and we do not think that's fair.

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Mrs McLeod: Just lastly, if there's still a moment, you mentioned the pilot projects on individualized funding and your interest in seeing the funding go in that direction. Do you have a sense that the pilot projects will set a base for determining what is appropriate individualized funding?

I know the difficulty is that with each individual there would be different needs, different expectations, and therefore different levels of funding. I guess one of the things that concerns me, as strongly supportive as I am in principle, is, does it become that much easier to simply reduce the overall funding that's available and stretch existing dollars to meet a constantly increasing need? That's what we've seen with the special services at home program. It doesn't look like the dollars have been cut, but they're trying to meet greater needs with the same amount of dollars. Are there ways in which the pilot project can be a base for setting guidelines that would ensure that individualized funding models provided adequate funding and weren't just a way of cloaking inadequacy?

Ms Keaney: I'd like to believe that's true. From all the reading we've done and with the experience of Alberta and so on, I think there are things we have learned that we don't want to repeat, but I do believe that a standardized tool for assessing levels of care can be appropriate for our sector and determine just causes because I think we see abuse in every system in terms of dollars being duplicated in some cases and being very inadequate in other cases. That's our belief, that it can work.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Third party.

Mr Egan: Can I just add to that for a second? I don't think the ministry has yet had all the information back from these pilot projects, so I don't think the ministry has drawn any conclusions yet from them.

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): One small, short ques-

The Chair: You're way over the limit. Sorry.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Thank you for coming today and for giving your views. I've only been to one of your communities, the one just north of Toronto, and I must say I think you rather understate the difference in the way you live and work with your residents, your members, as compared to some other facilities because it really is that mutuality and that sharing of a home that is a very different kind of aspect than most of the facilities we see. We tend to see more of a professional professional-client relationship, and you try to avoid that to the extent that is possible, although always recognizing that one has more of a role of a caregiver than the other. That's really quite impressive.

I want to tell you how impressed I was and that I think it is a model that should not get lost. I guess that's what worries me about this notion that you can suddenly find a template for care and then place it over every kind of institution and come out with something that has a so-called equality to it, but in fact only has a sameness, which has nothing to do with real equity. I wondered if you wanted to comment a little bit more about how you see the necessity for that divergent way of offering services because I think that's a very important aspect of

what you do.

Ms Keaney: I'll begin. This is an easy part to tackle. I think through our model those of us who live with handicapped people or people with disabilities, and certainly I have done so for 20 years, have to say that what we keep discovering is how important a person with a

disability is in our society.

What we learn from them is far greater than any books or university can give us in terms of a value system for our lives, so it is very unfortunate when we push aside people with disabilities for other causes, because I think what keeps on coming to the fore is that a society is identified by its value system as to where it puts its money. If we could stop and if we could do anything for the society, it would be to push forward more the people with disabilities so that we become a more human society and we have that care level for one another that dispels all kinds of other violence and warfare with one another.

I guess if I were to sum up in one sentence what it means to be in close relationships with people with disabilities, it is that it's a very important and fulfilling way to live. I think anybody who comes in contact with these people who would take the time would certainly recog-

nize that fact.

Mr Egan: I would just add that it's certainly been our experience in L'Arche, and I think it's certainly the experience of families who have children with a disability, that they need extra support. There's no question about that. But what often is not recognized is the gift side of that reality, that when we're open to receiving the gift of people with a disability and in relating to them in a mutual way, there is a gift for our lives as well and a gift for society. The whole thrust of bringing people out of the institutions and having them in the community is an important one not just for their lives but for the fact that as a society in Ontario we need the gift that these people can give.

Mrs Boyd: I guess the whole notion of the assigning of a hierarchy of needs then really flies in the face of

that, doesn't it, because this whole issue of you only serve those who are most in need really calls into question how we look at people and how we would ever make assumptions about whether one is more valuable or more needy than another.

Mr Egan: That's right, and who makes that decision?

Mrs Boyd: Yes, and on what criteria?

I must say I've had a fair bit of experience with one of the pilot projects on independent living and it seems to me that we have a great deal to learn from the way in which those projects have developed and the way in which people have learned the very great care that people bring to using the resources in the most effective way. I think that's what has impressed me more than anything else. Has that been the sort of experience you've had?

Ms Keaney: It has been, and that's the positive side. The negative side is that, in our experience and not in every case but in several cases, for people who have a great deal of autonomy and can function and like that lifestyle, it's great, but many people, even though they can make it on their own in terms of providing for themselves, feeding themselves, getting out to work, are

very lonely.

The Chair: Thank you. We'll go over to the govern-

ment side.

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): Thank you for making a presentation. When you have the international flavour obviously to your organization, and much has been made of the need for some kind of model to establish level of support and recognizing the differences of needs, I wonder whether in that recommendation, from your experience in the international scene, there is a model. Do you see areas which have taken this approach that you are suggesting and provided a kind of model?

Ms Keaney: Are you referring to individualized

funding?

Mrs Munro: Yes. I think it's your recommendation 2 and you refer in the recommendation "That the ministry develop and implement a tool which measures the level of support." My question then is, given your expertise and the international nature of your experience, where do you see that? Is there a tool? Is there a best practices?

Ms Keaney: No. I think in North America, and correct me if I'm wrong, Joe, we're probably further ahead in implementing that kind of a model. We don't see that happening in Europe or other places where we have

several communities.

**Mrs Munro:** Just one other question, if I might. What's the size of a L'Arche community?

**Ms Keaney:** They vary from approximately 15 to 20 people with disabilities to 40 in one locale.

Mr Egan: That's in a number of different houses, though.

Mrs Munro: Thank you. I think there are other

people.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): First of all, let me thank you for your presentation. It raised a number of questions in my mind, and you caused me to focus on one question that concerns me as I listen to the deputants. I have a sense, as I read your document, that there is a tension — it may be creative, it may not be — between

systems that are at play right now. It may be families and facilities, it may be institutions and home care, it may be community services or health ministry and so forth. I have a sense of silos that are not always necessarily helpful to each other, and that's not because they're deliberately trying not to be helpful; it's just something that happens.

You cut to it when you raised the question about parents who are particularly concerned about what happens to their children when they, the parents, die, and that is a very natural and a very sensitive concern. I wonder if you can respond to a sense of a model that might allow for the assistance from both ministries to be helpful. How do you begin to bring that together in a way that's helpful for the disabled person?

Ms Keaney: With health and community and social

services, those two ministries?

Mr Shea: I asked it advisedly, yes.

Ms Keaney: I wish I had the answer, but certainly that is a dialogue that has to continue: who has what responsibility. You talked about the two silos and tensions and so on, and some of the tension is creative, but I think what's happened in systems is that when we were in good times with money, people got along fine, but now with the cutbacks people are vying for the same dollars, and that certainly comes out even in a cooperative model.

Mr Egan: If I could respond quickly to that, I think the fundamental shift that's needed is to give the power and control to individuals and their families. If they really had control over the money and could go where they wanted to go to find the services they need, a lot of the interministerial silo problem I think would disappear because the families would make it disappear by taking the money and going where they want to go with it.

Mr Shea: Yet there needs to be some kind of stability for the institutions as well, some basis upon which they can predict the horizon and what the demands on them will be on the horizon.

Mr Egan: I think the ministries would have to set certain standard practices and accredit service providers and so on. That would still be a provincial responsibility.

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): If we go forward with your model of funding the individual, is there enough money in the system currently, if we restructure it, to take care of all the people who need services?

Mr Egan: We don't have that information. I'm not sure the ministry does either.

**Mr Carroll:** Basically I'm looking for an opinion more than anything else. If we restructure and go to the model you're talking about of funding the individual rather than an organization, is there enough in the system to take care of people who really need help, in your

opinion?

Mr Egan: I would probably say no. I think it would start to address the issues of equality and justice, though. Right now there are approximately 50,000 people with a disability who are getting some funding from the government, and an estimated 100,000 people in the province have disabilities. Just using those numbers that have come from the ministry, it's probably fair to say that more money is needed.

The Chair: Thank you very much for being with us today and for your very informative presentation.

#### INCOME MAINTENANCE GROUP

**The Chair:** I call upon the next group to come forward, the Income Maintenance Group. Can we be of some assistance?

Ms Marilyn Ferrel: No. thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Take your time. Would you identify yourself for the committee, please, and begin.

Mr Scott Seiler: Hello, my name is Scott Seiler. I'm the coordinator of the Income Maintenance Group.

Ms Ferrel: I'm Marilyn Ferrel, chair of the Income Maintenance Group.

Ms Beth Brown: My name is Beth Brown. I'm a researcher at the Daily Bread Food Bank, and we're also a member of the Income Maintenance Group.

Mr Seiler: I think I'll start by introducing the Income Maintenance Group. The Income Maintenance Group has been a coalition of service providers and consumer organizations since 1978. Our members range anywhere from the Canadian Mental Health Association to the Daily Bread Food Bank to PUSH Northwest to many other different organizations as well as serving and representing people with disabilities.

I'd like to start out by talking a wee bit about the overall cuts that are going on within the government of Ontario towards people with disabilities around social assistance. That's the primary area we in the Income Maintenance Group are interested in, although we touch on other related issues that help support people with disabilities in the community, such as the assistive devices program and many others.

In Ontario, since this government has been elected, we have been seeing fairly dramatic and large changes happening within the system of social assistance for persons with disabilities. We are seeing more people who are not being allowed to get on the FBA and we're also seeing many people being removed from the FBA system and shoved back down either on to the general welfare system or out on the street, literally. I think our growing street population is a very solid indicator of that, and even the Canadian Mental Health Association has backed us up on that simply by saying that 70% of those people who are out on the street have a disability which is a mental health problem. We're really seeing some dramatic cuts to people with disabilities.

We've been able to do a survey for our purposes, and it was meant to get a snapshot of what was going on across the province. We sent out about 100 surveys and got back about 37 of the 100. It showed in some areas, including the Premier's own riding, that people with disabilities are being removed from FBA and shoved down to the general welfare program, as well as in London, Kenora and many other areas. These things were reported by legal clinics, social service agencies, AIDS committees. The people being cut off are actually people with HIV and AIDS, people with epilepsy, in some places people with developmental handicaps and many other different types of disabilities, primarily ones that seem to be hidden and hard for people to realize that people

actually have those particular disabilities. That's basically

what's going on.

For instance, I polled some of the municipalities within the GTA. I phoned the Peel region social services department and they told me that their pending unit to go on to FBA dealt with approximately 1,100 people in 1995 and that about 60% of those people got on to the family benefits system. But last year in Peel only 40 people out of 400 got on, so that's a very large difference between the two years.

We've also heard, and it was reported in the House and it's in Hansard, that Durham region has produced a report that also backs up this same premise that people with disabilities are not getting on to FBA like they used to. They're spending more and more time sitting on general welfare and they are subjected to the 21.6% cut in welfare benefits and are suffering tremendously because of that cut in benefits. Those people who are being removed from FBA and going back on to general welfare are also suffering those cuts.

The number of people who are being cut back is quite dramatic in some areas. For instance, up in the north we know of one legal clinic that has dealt with 20 people in the last three months who have been removed from FBA and now are either having to go back down to general welfare or are having to live with family or friends as a

result of that.

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Ms Ferrel: The IMG is concerned about several cuts to social programs — the Ontario drug benefit, for example. There is now a \$2 prescription copayment. We are looking at people who are psychiatric survivors and only on welfare who are now expected to pay \$2 for each drug when they have to go to food banks to pay for food. I know of one person who was working, lost her job, and when she went on welfare her drug was delisted. Without this she could have taken other drugs, but those drugs caused her to have a seizure at least once or twice a week, which would heavily curtail her employment plans, her opportunities for employment. The drug she needed was delisted but it prevented her from having any seizures.

We're concerned about the family drug-dental plan, which now will offer only basic service. What about persons with epilepsy whose drugs cause gum disease and they need an operation every four years? I myself am concerned about the assistive devices program. Now you can only get a scooter if you need it to get around your own apartment. How you get a scooter around an apartment I'll never know. For me a scooter means I can get to work, because I can no longer depend on Wheel-Trans because of the cutbacks. If I have to walk to a store I can carry two items home. Does that mean I have to walk to the store twice a day to feed myself?

There have been other cutbacks to the assistive devices program, such that people who need oxygen can no longer get it. Those who have many needs for assistive

devices get less than 75% of them paid for.

We are also very concerned about the proposal to have social assistance, both welfare and the proposed guaranteed support plan, paid 50% by municipalities. We understand that this will be paid through property taxes rather

than income, yet people who can afford taxes usually have higher incomes than they do property values.

As a result, this gives the municipalities an incentive to devalue disabled persons further, cut them off the more expensive guaranteed support plan, or FBA as we know it today, and as a result people will be expected to do workfare and yet not have the accommodations they need. Many people would like to work, but what happens if they can't work full-time or if they have a seizure on the job? Are they going to be cut off welfare? These are our concerns.

As Scott mentioned, we have a number of people with disabilities dying on the streets now. What is going to happen in the future?

Ms Brown: I was invited to come today to talk a little bit about something that we've been noticing that Marilyn and Scott have talked about, which is people's reactions to what has happened to the welfare system and the worries and concerns for the future of those who are on the family benefit system, so a lot of the stuff you probably hear in your own constituency offices when you go back to your ridings, people's situations and worries about their future. Marilyn has really highlighted those, I think, effectively today.

We have four stories that I brought from our Telling

Our Stories project.

One of them is about a man who is 51 years old, currently on family benefits and a butcher by trade. He's had a string of health problems, not the least of which was acute depression and a stroke that he just suffered. He has also had a couple of leg operations because he was run over by a truck in his earlier career.

He's currently on FBA and feels that this has really been the bridge for him to get through a lot of tough issues. He's overcome alcohol and drug dependency. He's been sober for three years and he really thinks that the family benefits system has helped him survive. As he puts it: "Without family benefits I wouldn't be in a recovery home. I'd not have enough money to survive and I'd have to turn to crime." He'd much rather be

working right now.

His story is that he worked for most of life since he was 12, completed an apprenticeship and worked until five years ago when his illnesses were too much for him to work. People find out about his abilities and experience and are quite keen to hire him, and then they find out that he's over 50 and their interest in him wanes. His story is the story of a lot of people who volunteer at the Daily Bread Food Bank and also who are members at community agencies, volunteering all over Ontario. In fact, in two out of these four stories, people volunteer their time when they can.

The other story is from a woman who is living on family benefits right now. She says, "I've done some vocational rehabilitation and still cannot get hired for a salaried job. But for the past two years I've done volunteer work for three to four days a week, two hours a day, but I tire easily and cannot use my hands. I have angina, which my medication does not always help. My concern is that if the government reviews my status and sticks me on regular welfare, I would not be able to set any money aside for emergencies, such as a large hydro bill in the

winter, or legitimate expenses, such as warm boots in the winter, a winter coat, allergy or flu medication which is

not payable through the drug card."

This one was short and sweet. Someone wrote in and said: "I am a single person on family benefits. I'm male. I'm currently just able to live with dignity and would lose my independence and ability to pay my rent and live if they cut me off assistance. I want to be able to live and pay rent."

One of the other ones we got in the mail showed us that family benefits is really doing what it was intended to do: "Family benefits have kept me sane. I do not worry about paying my rent or having food money. Before, when I was on welfare and before the cutbacks, I used to beg for coffee money and eat garbage from the

food stores, cutting out the bad parts.

"Since the cutbacks, I have no money because I buy shoes and food for people I know who are on welfare. If FBA is reduced, I will have to eat Kraft dinner and other unhealthy foods so I can afford to share my meals with friends. Also, I don't know how I'll be able to buy shoes for friends any more and they may become very sick because I won't be able to take care of them. I'm worried that I won't be able to volunteer to do any more work as well. You can expect us to help each other, but it's making it difficult for the poor to be able to help each other, except the rich with their tax breaks and they're spent on vacations," and other things that they spend on like golf.

1630

Anyhow, his assumptions were that if there were changes, there would be some bad impact on him personally, but also generally the welfare cuts from his point of view — he's supporting other people who had their welfare cut, but he's on family benefits and doesn't need the same types of supports.

From a food bank point of view, we don't see a lot of the people currently on family benefits because the amount of money they're making is just enough that they don't need a food bank. We're hoping that trend continues and that we don't start seeing disabled people

through our doors in a high number.

We'd just like to stop there so you can ask your

questions of Marilyn and Scott.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We have 12 minutes left. Mrs McLeod for the official opposition.

Mrs McLeod: I think it's perhaps the New Democrats' turn.

The Chair: Yes, you're quite right. My apologies.

Mrs Boyd: Thank you all for coming. It's very good to hear from people who have the kind of experience that you all share in terms of this kind of issue. I was very interested to hear that you had done a survey and that you were finding what I certainly am finding in my constituency office. I've had a number of different families come forward who have suddenly found themselves, even though their conditions are worsening, being cut off FBA and put back on welfare and it's quite inexplicable. I know our legal clinic has been finding the same thing. So just to confirm that kind of trend, I think it's quite distressing.

When I listen to all of you, what really impresses me is that it isn't just one thing that has caused the problem. It's the accumulation of thing after thing that has really made it very difficult. Do you want to comment on that? I think the impacts are magnified each time they hit.

Mr Seiler: Sure. One of the issues that makes that happen is that the systems are very interconnected and when you touch one part of the system, there are ramifications to other places within the system. For instance, I would suspect that as the cuts go further and further, we are going to end up seeing more and more people hitting the food banks, because rents are still going up, everything is going up except for the amount of money people get on social assistance, disabled or not.

What's going to end up happening is that eventually all of the user fees that are going to be asked to be paid, all of the copayments that are going to be asked for, all of these things have a cumulative effect and it's whittling down on a pension that just barely makes people get by today. That's really what the cumulative effective is doing, but it's over a massive amount of time and it's a

lot of things thrown in there together.

Also we're having people who, because of the stress they're facing, are facing more health-related problems. It's harder for people to get to work because of things like Wheel-Trans and other issues such as that — and Wheel-Trans is not the only place that is happening. It's happening all across the province with accessible transit. We're even seeing cutbacks coming with the TTC. For people who are able to ride the TTC, simply paying for a TTC pass will be impossible for people on social assistance, and if that's the case, how are people to find work, those who can? The kinds of things that are happening are such as that.

Marilyn, you had something you wanted to add?

Ms Ferrel: Yes. My greatest fear is that people will not be able to survive. People are going to food banks now, people are living on the street and, as we know, people only live seven years on the street before we find them dead. What is going to happen with further cutbacks?

I myself am scared stiff that I will lose my subsidized rent. What will happen then? Some psychiatric survivors, we're hearing, have committed suicide because the cumulative effect has been so devastating that they see

the future as impossible.

Mrs Boyd: I certainly have heard the same thing. Mission Services in London offers some programs for people who have mental disabilities and they're finding that the \$2 fee is enough to completely discourage people from taking the medications they need in order to be productive.

Mr Seiler: Yes, it's very common.

Mr Carroll: Thank you for coming to give us your input today. I'd like to talk with you a little bit about the system. We had some people last week from Metro, from an organization called MARC, and that's an acronym for Metro Area something or other. They were an umbrella organization that coordinates services of 52 government-funded organizations that provide services to 5,000 developmentally disabled people. I asked a question of that group of people. I said the numbers, to me — 52

organizations, controlled by another organization, giving services to 5,000 people — if that wasn't part of the problem, that the 52 CEOs and the 52 organizations we were supporting were taking up so much of the money that there wasn't enough left there to take care of the people we started out to serve. Could I have a comment on that about the system we're dealing with now? Is it as efficient as it can be or do we have some place to move to make it more efficient?

Mr Seiler: I can answer that. There are always efficiencies that could be possibly found, but the problem we really are facing here is that dollars have been withdrawn from these systems, they've been withdrawn by the government and the government is continuing to withdraw these systems. In fact, the transfer down to the municipal level, for instance in Metro and in many of the larger areas where there are very many people with disabilities, will make it literally impossible for the municipalities to provide those services and pay for those services on the tax base that they have today, because of the extent.

We need a variety of services. Something that I think you're missing in the number of services you're counting there is the whole variety of things that those services do. They do not all duplicate each other; that is not correct. In fact, they do a whole multitude of different services. If we went into a service provision system that was based on the user of the service getting the money and then going out and buying the service from an agency or organization, I don't think those numbers would be smaller. I think if you went into a free market enterprise and gave the money directly to people, you'd probably end up with a larger system of service providers and more people vying for the services than even today.

Mr Carroll: You think there is some inefficiency in

the system, though?

Mr Seiler: I think you could always find inefficiencies everywhere, including inside your own government.

Mr Carroll: The 5% funding change that we made, do you think there was 5% efficiency that could have been found in the system?

Mr Seiler: It's 7%, excuse me.

Mr Carroll: It was 2.5% annualized to 5%. Was there that much —

Mr Seiler: No, there was 2.5% and then 5% on top.

**Mr Carroll:** Okay, whatever number you want to choose, was there that much inefficiency that we could have found in the system?

Mr Seiler: To be very honest with you, our last government frankly bore out most of the inefficiencies. If you want to go further into inefficiencies, then you're going to have to be doing a completely different, new model, which is something like the direct funding model.

Mr Carroll: And you subscribe to that type of model?
Mr Seiler: Yes. I think there are some very strong merits to the direct funding model, because it gives the control back to the consumer and if the service is no good, then market forces operate and people don't go and use those services.

The Chair: Mrs Johns, you have one minute.

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): I just had a question about the drug benefits. It was my understanding that this

government hadn't delisted any drugs and in effect we had added more drugs to the drug formulary. You were commenting that some of the drugs that I think you or a friend were taking had been delisted and I was just interested in hearing about that because it's not my understanding that's happened.

Ms Ferrel: There was a delisting of drugs under the NDP and I don't think they all have been reinstated, and I'm hearing that a lot of people who are not eligible for the are really having a hard time. I know someone on CPP who gets the minimum of CPP and spends half that on drugs. So drugs are a real problem for people on welfare

and people not eligible for FBA.

Mrs Johns: I just want to say that the government has listed 372 new drugs on the drug formulary since June 1995. Thank you for that clarification. I appreciate it. 1640

Mrs McLeod: I do hope that when Mr Carroll asks whether or not a 5% reduction is manageable with no efficiencies, he's also prepared to consider the unmet needs of the several thousand people who have been identified to this committee as not getting any support at all yet because the dollars haven't stretched to those individuals. I think that's a really critical issue whenever we talk about the support for individualized funding, to recognize it can't be done solely with the dollars that are currently in the system because there are so many individuals whose needs are not being addressed with any support at all, including the thousands who are at home with aging parents and the parents wonder what they're going to do.

I'm not sure where to begin to ask the questions. I appreciate the presentation you've made on all the effects of the cuts that have taken place to date. When we originally called for the hearings, it was exactly that we wanted to look at, the effect of the cuts. Supposedly there haven't been cuts. We know there have been and we wanted to try and bring out what the effect is.

You've touched on the fact that mega-week introduces a whole new set of challenges, so maybe I'll start there, and if it's unfair, please tell me, because I'm not sure how much time people have had to think about the implications of some of the funding shifts. One of the ones that concerns me particularly is social housing. I'm wondering if you've begun to think about potential ramifications of the municipalities having 100% of the responsibility for social housing, including all the rentpeared-to-income units and including all the special care beds for the psychiatrically disabled in the community.

Mr Seiler: I think it's going to have a dramatic effect. I think it will spell the end of social housing in Ontario, not only in the municipality of Metro Toronto but in every other municipality in this province. There is no possible way they could ever afford the upkeep on the buildings, let alone pay for the actual subsidies to the rent through the property tax system. There just is not enough money being raised through property taxes today to do that.

Another huge issue for the Who Does What announcements that happened last week, or two weeks ago now, I guess, is the entire issue of the downloading of welfare and social assistance. Frankly, we think very strongly that

this will also be a very detrimental thing to people with disabilities. As Marilyn has suggested, there will be a disincentive for the provincial government and the municipalities to put anyone on the higher and more expensive system and there will be an incentive to dump

as many people as possible.

The estimation I would give at this particular time is no different than the estimations I gave last year to other committees in this province doing this type of work, which is that about 100,000 people will be removed from family benefits and not put on to the guaranteed support plan, and these people will be subjected to general

welfare and workfare.

Ms Ferrel: I would like to add, if subsidized housing is taken away, how are people going to survive if they are put on general welfare and they need to pay hydro costs? I don't think people understand the frustration of surviving as a disabled person, as it is, on a psychological level. They take away our income, our housing and put us on the street. What do you expect us to do? It almost reminds me of Germany in the 1940s.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation, and thank you in particular, Ms Ferrel, for a very

heart-warming, firsthand account.

Our next deputation is from the Ontario Federation of Labour. Are they here? If not, we'll move on.

#### GREAT LAKES SOCIETY FOR DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES OF ONTARIO

The Chair: The Great Lakes Society for Developmental Services of Ontario: Are they here? Terrific. We'll give you some time to come to the front. Thank you very

much for being with us.

Mr Geoff McMullen: Good afternoon. My name is Geoff McMullen, and I'm executive director of Developmental Services of Leeds and Grenville in Brockville, eastern Ontario. I'm the president of the Great Lakes Society for Developmental Services of Ontario and it's in that capacity I'm here today. Joining me is Dianne Belliveau. Dianne is the executive director of Brantwood Residential Development Centre in Brantford and is also an executive member of our society.

We appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today, but we recognize that it's been a long day, that time is moving along, and we'll try to be brief and to the point. We will begin by giving you a profile so you know what the Great Lakes society does, who we are and what we represent. We will then move to a main presentation on the impact of the Progressive Conservatives' funding actions on individuals and families served by our society.

As mentioned before, we will leave quite a bit of time, hopefully, for questions. I had said to Dianne earlier, "If I do the presentation, you can handle all the questions."

I won't say what the remark was.

The Great Lakes Society is a provincially incorporated body of agencies which provides client services to developmentally challenged persons and families across Ontario. Our members cover distinct geographical areas throughout this province.

The 14 member agencies that compose the society serve over 1.100 adults and children in a continuum of residential programs. These range from congregate care settings, which are known as schedule 2 facilities, to family home care, associate and foster types of home care programs and supported independent living. We also provide over 7,400 clients with professional support services, individual and family support services and day supports. We operate with a combined budget of close to \$90 million of provincial subsidy and employ over 1,600 full-time-equivalent staff.

The society's members have worked in partnership with government for over 30 years in promoting optimal service delivery for Ontario's developmentally challenged. Over the years we have kept abreast of changes in philosophy, program and service delivery and education, and remain on the leading edge of contemporary and

innovative service provision.

We are guided by a volunteer board of directors who bring diverse community opinions and a broad range of expertise. We have maintained a degree of rigour in professional health services and program standards, and our staff tend to be highly trained, experienced and career oriented. In short, we represent a considerable level of expertise in Ontario in the field of developmental services, and I could say, after mentioning the \$90 million, a considerable amount of money spent in that field as well, as you can appreciate.

I have attached three pages with further detail for you in the appendix that you can look at and see where the agencies come from. Basically, we're represented from the Quebec border through southwestern Ontario and into northern Ontario. The agencies are somewhat different, but all servicing that particular population.

To look at the impact of the Conservative revolution from the society's perspective, I have to again caution that our bias is that we are service providers and we come from that; on the other hand, we have had valuable experience and have been in this field for many years.

The Great Lakes Society supports the provincial government's attempts, certainly, to deal with Ontario's economic woes. We all recognize the need to do that. We applaud the commitment to protect the most vulnerable members of our province; I think that's been stated to us time and time again. However, it is clear to the society that the developmentally challenged citizens of the province are those who have had no hand in creating the financial hardships for the government and who cannot, of themselves, correct the problem and may pay - I say, may pay - an inordinate price.

Many of the clients served by the Great Lakes Society are the most profoundly challenged. In addition to cognitive delays, our clients have additional, and often multiple, presenting problems. Severe physical handicaps, medical fragility and mental illness coexist to make service provision an extremely complicated and costly

In general, the impact of funding cuts across the agencies, as well as on the individuals and families we serve, is varied. Those who are more resilient, have a broader system of supports and strong coping abilities have experienced minimal impact to date. When I say that, those are those who are already in the service system; we'll speak later on those who aren't. The cuts certainly have made all of us become more resourceful. As agencies, we have had to learn to do business differently, while maximizing existing resources to client services. The fear is that we are now on the edge of tolerance in a climate of increased demand and stretched capacity. Only history will tell us what the cumulative effects of reductions have really meant.

Specifically, the fiscal constraint imposed on the society's agencies over the past three years has led to service reductions and unemployment. Service reductions have taken the form of larger client-staff ratios, longer waiting lists for professional interventions, elimination of programs and cancellation of staff training and so on. In many instances, wage rollbacks, reductions of hours of work and layoffs have been directed at those who care for our most vulnerable citizens.

That said, also with the cuts, and as we've done business differently and learned to do business differently, there's no doubt that there have been administrative cuts, that probably it was a wake-up call for many of us. By doing business differently, that's where many of the cuts came from. I think the efficiencies in many areas have been shown without touching moneys going into direct service, so there are two sides of the coin as well.

When we talk about quality of life, it's a concept that's difficult enough to reach with sufficient financial resources available; certainly it's been eroded. However, throughout this process we have made a number of observations. We would like to share some of these observations with you and challenge you, during your continued restructuring of service delivery and funding, to pause and consider not only the direct impact, but also the cumulative and ripple effect. We would hope that prior to further cuts or restructuring decisions in all services, you pause and ask, "Will this impact on our most vulnerable citizens?"

Although we have always known that the developmentally challenged represent a disproportionate number of consumers who use the health and social service systems, today the reality has never been more evident. We know from the literature that those we serve have a higher than average incidence of mental illness, are more likely to be victims of violence or sexual assault and have increased medical needs. It is only in the last few years that we have understood such issues as Alzheimer disease being not only more prevalent in our population, but having a much earlier onset in some of the people we serve.

A number of issues that are coming to light include longevity, and I'll mention later about longevity in life. We didn't see in Alzheimer's, for example — people with Down syndrome are the people who are now suffering it earlier. We're talking about onset around the age of 50, when they are still home with mom and dad. People 15 or 20 years ago didn't live to that age. So we're seeing more of the issues of longevity as well.

Reductions in other areas of our social, health and education can and do have an impact on the developmentally challenged members of our province. We've taken a

couple of examples, one being in the health field. We certainly see a higher incidence in physical and mental illness, an extended time necessary for diagnosis, and more complexity in diagnosis and treatment. When you're talking about mental illness and physical health, that means they're going to show up at the general hospitals and the psychiatric wards proportionally more often.

Extended time necessary for diagnosis: the time that a GP, for example, would spend with someone who has little to no communication trying to figure out what's wrong, and then of course the complexity with the diagnosis and treatment. We find it's getting tougher and tougher at times to find the appropriate professionals who want to support the clientele we support. With these realities, we know there is direct impact when services are reduced. The impact certainly is magnified when you have a disproportionate number of persons using the service. For the developmentally challenged persons of Ontario, we certainly don't think this is fair.

We look at a second example in education. Again, we're not denying that restructuring is necessary, but there are dangers for students with special needs when the focus is on classroom-based budgeting. We know that to receive an appropriate education, children with developmental challenges often need the support of specialized professionals, such as speech and language pathologists, social workers and behaviour therapists, who are not in themselves classroom teachers. A developmental handicap is not subject to a quick fix. It requires a lifelong series of interventions and supports from trained specialists. So restructure educational administration, board catchment areas and taxes, but please ensure professional supports to developmentally handicapped students are not diminished across the province.

Similar examples could be provided in other areas such as corrections, victim services and housing. Unfortunately, in times of diminishing resources, history has shown it is precisely these services that are reduced because the investment in time and resources per capita is judged to be too high.

We would also not rule out prioritization relative to the complexity of people we serve. To be clear, we believe some systems will choose not to serve the developmentally handicapped population if given a choice. We have seen examples of that before, that when tough times come, it's somebody else's job. It's not health, education, whatever; it's the other system's to look at.

In review, you may say that the developmental service sector has survived the government's direct cuts with minimal impact, and you would be partially right. I think when we look at other fields, we do say that at times ourselves. But I get back to the point that we're talking about those people who are already in the system, not those people who haven't entered the system and who have service needs. What you must remember is that direct cuts to services for people with developmental disabilities have stretched the limits of a system of supports that has historically been underfunded. Historically, agencies have not been able to keep up with the demand for community supports and services.

Moreover, the gap between identified needs and available resources is widening as the funding base of agen-

cies is slowly being eroded while demand for supports and services continues to increase as a result of improved life expectancy, a greater awareness of complex problems in people with developmental disabilities and a process of deinstitutionalization. We as a society certainly support the move of deinstitutionalization and work closely with those institutions that are moving people out.

We certainly have more specific pressure points that we face daily. These are areas that are not in this service in many ways that are pressuring on the service.

The aged parent with the adult child whose needs have increased at a time when the capacity of the parent has decreased: We're seeing parents who have always had their children at home — when I say "children," now they're adults and you have a 55-year-old or a 60-year-old with a 75-year-old or 80-year-old mother type of thing. I imagine some of you get those knocks and calls at your door on a regular basis. It always amazes me. I think we have a lot of services across this province in many ways, but there are still those families out there that have done it themselves and are now reaching the point where they need our help.

Another area is the children, many with complex and expensive service needs, who have been crown wards of the child welfare system and now will require lifelong supports from the developmental service system. We're seeing more of these children coming through, apart again from our ability in the health field to maintain children and life. As late as this morning I was planning for a young fellow who is going to be 21 and will be leaving the child welfare system. He's been a crown ward since he was a baby, so we're trying to plan and to find out where services and supports will be. To date there is

nothing, and that's only one of many.

Then there's the youth who are graduates of our integrated school system who have little to no prospects of paid or volunteer work. They are a group who have come through the system. They have not entered the institutions. They've gone through the school system and done extremely well; the school has integrated them. But 10 years ago, when we were talking about kids coming through and getting out and finding employment, we weren't talking about an employment market or a complex market that we have today. For many of these, to learn one skill, rather than multiskills, would be something. What we're finding now are parents who are themselves with a 21-year-old at home who had been going to school every day, two people working. What do you do? You run into those situations. Again, I imagine some of you have heard of them.

In summary, our challenge to you during this time of social change and economic restructuring is to be vigilant in ensuring that the stewards of change protect the most vulnerable members of our province. We have no cure for developmental disabilities, but we do have the ability to provide a quality life within our communities. We know many will need our supports to a varying degree not only as children but throughout their life. The Great Lakes Society is committed to working with the government in meeting these demands and challenges.

The Chair: We have 13 minutes left. Mr Carroll for the government side.

Mr Carroll: I guess based on the deal that you folks made at the beginning, Ms Belliveau now gets to answer all the questions.

Mr McMullen: Sounds okay to me.

Mr Carroll: I really appreciate your thoughtful criticism. It comes from the heart and there were some very good ideas in there. One should understand that as members of the government and the Conservative caucus, we also are very much interested in protecting and being diligent and taking care of the most vulnerable members of our society. That very much is a priority of ours, so

please don't have any fear about that.

You made some comments about how this whole area has been historically underfunded, and you talked about the increased demand and the waiting lists that this has produced. While we've historically underfunded this area, we have accumulated \$100 billion worth of debt in our province, so it's not like we paid our bills while we were historically underfunding this. We didn't even pay our bills. Now we're at a crossroads where we've got some people coming to us saying, "Deinstitutionalize." Other people are coming to us saying, "No, you've got to keep those institutions there," people coming to us saying, "Individualized funding is the route to go," other people coming and saying, "No, we should have block funding for organizations."

I'd like to have your thoughts on this: Is it time to fundamentally redesign the system, and can we redesign it so that we spend more money taking care of the people we started out to serve and less money on the bureau-

cracy and the complexity of the system?

Mr McMullen: I guess my first thought in response is that I know of all the challenges that are coming in: "Do the fix this way" or "Do the fix this way." I personally don't think there is an easy fix to this; it takes two or

three major changes that we'll need.

In regard to the bureaucracy, I think some of the cuts have been there and have worked to help with the efficiencies. More control by consumers may help. I think we're into a climate now where we've had a major philosophical swing in our field, from one of, if one has a developmental disability or a child with a developmental disability, the government should look after everything, and I think the pendulum has swung and we're realizing that every family has their responsibilities and the balance is there. That certainly has happened over time.

In regard to efficiencies, I know a group of organizations in our area brought in the Queen's business school to take a look and show us where efficiencies could be made, and we made some of those. So there's no doubt

there is a need there.

The shift to community living from institutions I think has to be taken, well planned, well thought out, but it's a direction that's happened across North America and Europe and we certainly are in support of that. You do need solid services in your community to do that, with a balance of community responsibility as well.

Mrs Munro: One quick question, and I guess it relates back to a couple of the points Mr Carroll was making in terms of the fact that in being here and hearing the responses of various groups, obviously you get the sense of those who see this as the route to go and so forth.

My question then is, what is your response to those who would advocate a consumer-focused delivery model? I guess my question comes also from the information you provided in terms of the fact that your organization is primarily a funded organization. So am I correct in assuming that this notion of a consumer-focused model would be a significant shift in the way in which you have been accustomed to operating, and what would be your response to that?

Mr McMullen: You can tackle that one, and then I'll

pick up.

Ms Dianne Belliveau: To answer your last question, yes, it would be a shift in how most of the members of the society presently provide service. I don't know that it would be unwelcome.

In answer to your other question about different groups coming and saying, "This is the answer," I think that as a society, we believe there needs to be the whole continuum of services; there needs to be a whole bag. There isn't necessarily one answer across the entire province. There isn't necessarily one way that's going to be the fit for everyone. There needs to be a diversity, but at the same time I think you can offer that diversity in a better-structured program so that the actual resources are being put down in the front line to services.

Mrs Munro: Would you support the consumer-focused

position taken by others?

Ms Belliveau: A consumer focus, ves.

Mr McMullen: A consumer focus and more consumer control over what service they get and where they get it, we certainly would support. Interestingly enough, as I say that, we as an organization handle a lot of special needs agreements, so people buy the service from us, and if we don't give good service, they leave.

That said, I was speaking at another group about a year ago in regard to consumer control and talking about customers, who your customers are, and a gentleman stood up partway through and said: "I'm one of your customers too. I'm a taxpayer." So I guess there's a balance along the way that brings in the reality.

We strongly believe that consumers should have more control, but we also have to have that range of service, so I would not personally support, "Here's the money; now

go get it." There's a balance in there.

Mrs McLeod: I wanted to first get you into the whole issue of understanding the unmet need that's out there and what must be a growing competition in terms of those who are providing service with those who are wanting to provide care at home and looking for the individualized funding, and the pot of money seems not only stable but in fact declining.

I guess there are a couple of things I want to ask you. First of all, one of the things that I get a sense of is that the cuts that agencies have experienced have taken away any flexibility they had to provide support for alternative models even though there may be a belief in wanting to go that route, because the agencies are stretched in order to meet the needs of those who are actually resident and

in their care and for whom they are therefore legally responsible. I'd like to know if that sense is accurate.

I'd also like to try and get a sense of why this seems to be a problem that we haven't dealt with before. When I first started meeting with some of the special services at home people, I wondered, have we just increased our expectation of what government can do to provide support? Somebody said to me something so basic as, "You know, there are new babies being born all the time, but people aren't leaving the system at the other end." It's not an equal in/out kind of thing that keeps the budget balanced, so there's a constant pressure on it. I'm wondering if you've got a whole new cohort of people whose needs have never been met, those parents who kept their kids at home — inclusive education was a part of the support that let that happen — and now are aging. That's a whole group of people who perhaps we've never had to deal with before because it just didn't exist before.

I know that's a whole bag, but I get this feeling that we keep thinking the system as it is should be able to just be changed to meet the need when in fact there are new needs that we've never encountered as a society before.

Mr McMullen: I have worked in the field for 15 to 20 years, and the issue that I mentioned, Alzheimer's, is just one of many issues. We did not see 55-year-old developmentally handicapped people in any numbers. Today it's most common. We're seeing people with developmental disabilities retiring out of day programs and workshops and that type of thing, so that's one.

Ms Belliveau: In addition, those individuals with diverse or complex medical needs are living longer and are remaining within the system and requiring additional

supports as they're aging.

Mrs McLeod: What used to happen? What happened to the adult children of aging parents when the aging parents couldn't care for them any longer, or is that a

whole new phenomenon we're about to face?

Mr McMullen: Part of it is something new. Another part was the move to less congregate settings in many cases. When the adult child could no longer stay at home, and it was usually mom that was still living — our demographics at least show us that — they would end up in a larger institution or a 12-bed group home, or in some cases nursing homes. I remember a number of years ago that it was fairly common to walk through a nursing home, especially in the rural counties, and find people with developmental disabilities living there.

Mrs Boyd: This is a very important point, because of course the demographics were not projected by most parents at the time that they would have had children who are now in that group from 50 to 70. I mean, most parents who at, say, age 45 had a child who had Down syndrome had the prediction that the child would not live beyond age 20 or 25, and that has gradually grown, so

we have all of that.

I think the medically fragile piece is an extraordinarily important piece. We can save people through technology and through better medication, and we are saving them, but then we put them and their families into this very difficult situation, and many of the advocates for people who are disabled are worried that because of the pressure on the almighty dollar, having made a decision as a

community that we want to maintain and that we value these lives, we might change our mind.

Have you concerns that this emphasis on quality of life, depending on how it is defined, and this emphasis on cost may impact upon the safety of people with develop-

mental disabilities in our communities?

Ms Belliveau: It's an interesting question. It depends on what direction the cuts go. Up till this point in time I don't believe that any of the agencies we represent are at all concerned that there's increased risk to the clients presently in service. Just to use an example, our agency primarily provides support to people who are developmentally handicapped and are medically fragile. If there are continued cuts, that would change the type of support and service we could provide. Presently we have registered nurses, occupational therapists and physiotherapists, and we have very aggressive, proactive medical supports that we provide, and are thus able to keep people very healthy. If there were further cuts, I believe that would directly increase the risk to those individuals.

Mrs Boyd: Certainly that's the fear advocates have, and that if they are living independently or living with their families, things like the \$2-per-prescription issue could become a very big issue in some of those families. They're really worried about that, particularly when there is a great deal of support needed that way. Oxygen issues — I mean, there are a whole lot of issues you can cut down on one side, and then when you come to the whole issue of making determinations about the advisability of treating someone based on quality of life, as we see in the new substitute decisions legislation, I think there is some reason to be really fearful.

We know that in the past we have not always been careful of people who have been different, and the histories of our big institutions are histories of people not necessarily receiving the kind of medical care that would have maintained their lives, on the assumption that they didn't have much of a life expectancy or "much of a life," if I may use quotations around that. I'm very fearful that we're headed in the same direction, that we're seeing not a hierarchy of need but a hierarchy of deservedness. Do you think that's possible?

Mr McMullen: I think it's possible. That's why we're just raising the caution flag at this point to look at those ripple effects and those cumulative effects, and also acknowledging that today many people still are receiving good-quality service. We've had that philosophical shift that has said, "Let's own up to what responsibilities we have." That part's been good, but the caution is what's

happening down the road.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr McMullen and Ms Belliveau, for being here today and sharing your expertise with us.

#### DEBBIE VERNON

The Chair: We move on to Ms Debbie Vernon. Welcome.

**Ms Debbie Vernon:** On behalf of Karen and my family, I would like to thank the standing committee for this opportunity to talk about our personal stories. What I'm presenting to you today is Karen's story.

Forty-two years ago, my parents celebrated — we're one of those older families that kept coming up this afternoon — the birth of their first child, my sister Karen. When she was a baby, the doctor diagnosed Karen as having cerebral palsy, epilepsy and a developmental disability. The doctor told my parents not to expect my sister to live long, that some day Mom would go and find her dead. He went on to recommend that my parents put her in an institution and get on with their lives.

Fortunately, my parents did not take the doctor's advice. Instead they wanted Karen to be part of their family, to be loved and cared for by them, and our family remained intact. In those days my parents were rare. They made this decision at a time when thousands of other children were abandoned by their parents to languish in large and impersonal institutions, locked away from society.

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Soon after Karen was diagnosed, my parents got together with some other parents and together they pioneered the local association of the mentally retarded, as it was called then. It's known now as community living. They did this to support one another and to make sure children like Karen could live in the community. These children stayed away from two large institutions that loomed nearby.

My parents worked long and hard raising enough money through fund-raising efforts to build a school. Back then Karen was going to school in a church basement. Once the school was built, Karen went there until she was 21 years old. Again, as Karen grew older my parents worked hard to raise money to build what was then called ARC Industries, which was a sheltered workshop. Karen and others would work there, but it didn't last long; Karen was there for about a year and a half. She had nothing constructive to do and she was terribly unhappy, and she quit going.

During this time there began a shift in the decision-making and the control of the parent organization. Suddenly the managers and executive director, who were hired by the parents to run programs for the association, started setting the agenda and direction of the organization. For the first time the power and authority on major decisions were out of the hands of my parents and others along with them. The association was no longer a true parent organization and my parents quit going to the

meetings.

My parents managed at home for several years. Mom never pursued her career in nursing; she was needed to stay home to look after us. Then dad passed away. Before he died he asked us to promise never to institutionalize Karen. My younger brother and sister and I moved into our own homes and Karen stayed with mom. Mom is living on a fixed and limited income. We worried about Karen's future now that dad was gone and mom was getting older. We wanted to build new support for Karen for a time when mom might no longer be able to care for her.

This is when we started to learn about special services at home. We were delighted to learn about the program late in 1991. This program of the Ministry of Community and Social Services is very successful. It takes advantage

of the knowledge, commitment and competence of families, what they can apply to face challenges related to disabilities. This program empowers people with disabilities through individualized funding, giving them and their families the financial resources to purchase the special

supports or services they need.

We applied for funding and Karen began to receive the help of two support workers whom mom and Karen hired to help with her personal care and going out for short walks to improve her mobility. Mom was able to go out one afternoon a week alone for the first time in several years, leaving Karen at home with one of the workers, whose company she enjoyed.

We administered our own contract with funding of \$195 per week. At that time, the costs of sheltered workshops in Ontario averaged \$256 per week and group homes for adults averaged \$546 per week. This is based on the government's estimates briefing book, program and resource summary of 1993-94. Karen's needs are higher than the average and she requires help 24 hours a

After three months we had to reapply for more funding to continue Karen's support. This is when the government started turning down our requests for funding. Every time we were denied the funding, we had to appeal. In five and a half years we've had to write 11 appeal letters. That's not including letters to the editor, letters to other families in the province who are going through the same problems we are in terms of finding the funding and letters to our local MPP; that's all additional.

In 1994 the assistant deputy minister, Sue Herbert, told us that there were not enough funds in special services at home to meet our request of \$13,000 for the year. She suggested that Karen could go to a life skills program, which is a segregated program where people sit around in an industrial building waiting their turn to go out in the community. When we appealed to the Minister of Community and Social Services, at that time Tony Silipo, he told us there had been difficulties in meeting the growing demand for special services at home and they were reviewing the situation. We're still waiting; that was 1993.

At this time we were astounded to learn that the local association for community living offered a family home program and that the government, MCSS, provided funding to host families who took people with disabilities into their home to live with them as part of their family. We questioned the government why host families, or what is known as the associate family program in other areas, were paid \$35 a day, were provided with respite care or relief to that care provider every other weekend, were given \$20 per week for travel expenses etc, which amounted to approximately the same amount that Karen's natural family was denied by this same ministry. The ministry did not respond to our question. This was one point we raised in one of our appeal letters.

We felt betrayed. My parents had saved the government millions of dollars by not sending Karen away to live in an institution. They saved additional dollars by working hard with other parents to raise the money to build a school and a place for Karen to work. Parents who left their children in institutions at an average cost of \$90,000 per year or in a community group home were

never expected to pay one penny towards their support and care. These parents did not face the tedious task of filling out application forms every year or having to write appeal letters for their son's or daughter's support.

Funding for Karen's personal care was cut. In desperation we went to home care for help. This Ministry of Health agency costs \$17.06 per hour, of which almost half goes to administration fees. Our special services at home workers were paid \$10 an hour with no administration fees. Home care provided two workers to come and assist Karen. Karen received the services of home care for two and a half years. In this time period Karen had 12 different workers come and go.

Last summer we told the home care workers to stay away. They were bossy to Karen and refused to take her out for her walks. Her mobility had deteriorated and this was causing heavier care for mom. Karen was terribly unhappy with the home care workers and she did not

want them coming into her home to help.

We had a plan and applied to special services at home for funding so that Karen could go to the therapeutic pool for exercise to make her stronger. To do this she would need the assistance of two workers because of her severe and sudden seizures. Her personal care would be done after she showered after her swim. We asked MCSS for 18 hours a week and we were approved for eight.

Again we had to appeal this decision. Seven months ago Karen's application was sent to the North Bay area office. Our appeal letter of November 16, 1996, sits on the assistant deputy minister's desk. We still wait for a decision about Karen's funding, along with 70 other families. The ADM asked us in a recent letter to forgive her for the recent delay. There has been a backlog with the ADM's office since October 1996. It is totally unacceptable for the government to keep families hanging without knowing if funding will be available for muchneeded support at home.

In the spring of 1995 during the pre-election campaign, the Conservatives said that the Harris government would move quickly to expand the individualized funding mechanisms currently in the SSAH program. They recognized that only 3% of the developmental service budget, which is over \$900 million, of the MCSS services is allocated to individualized funding; 97% is allocated to institutions and agency programs. Only 3% of that budget goes to special services at home. They said that the current system is largely unresponsive to individual needs and that

it is inequitable and inefficient.

The \$5 million recently announced for special services at home by Janet Ecker, Minister of Community and Social Services, barely addresses the needs of the 1,000 families who are presently on waiting lists across the province. This amount is not sufficient to eliminate the waiting lists and fulfil this year's requests from approximately 11,000 families who rely on special services at home. We don't feel confident that Karen will benefit from any of this new-found money.

The Conservatives were asked what commitments they would make to respond to consumer demands for fundamental changes to the developmental service system to shift funding which amounts to several hundred million dollars from institutions and agency programs to individ-

ual funding. The Conservatives replied that individualized funding was the best model for future funding arrangements, that it promoted individual development and recognized unique capabilities, that individualized funding made good sense and is economical. To date our family doesn't see evidence that the Harris government is delivering what was promised in 1995.

Our vision for the future: Karen loves her home in the country. Our family lawyer, who is also our local Conservative MPP, helped us establish a discretionary trust fund for Karen. Provisions have been made that she would inherit her home and live there as long as she likes. Karen would live with someone she knows and feels comfortable with, someone who would want to live with her, to be her care provider in exchange for room and board. With individualized funding, Karen would purchase the supports needed much the same way she does now with special services at home.

Karen's family will continue to be a big part of her life. We want Karen to be connected to people in her community, where friendships develop and flourish. Together we will continue to support her with major decisions that will affect her life. We have the love and

commitment to do this.

What needs to happen to make our vision a reality is that the Conservative government must live up to its promise to expand the individualized funding mechanism immediately. The SSAH program is grossly underfunded and thousands of families are presently suffering. Battleworn parents who are older and who have fought for years for the betterment of their disabled children are now simply giving up and are forced to seek a much costlier alternative for their son or daughter.

Change the present system, which the Conservatives admit as being inequitable, inefficient, inadequate, unresponsive and inefficient. For many years MCSS was centralized and organized into policy and operation branches which were headed by two assistant deputy ministers. This was considered by many as being an

efficient mode of operation.

However, in the 1980s, MCSS embarked upon a strategy of creating area offices, smaller "fiefdoms" which were supposed to be responsive to local needs. They have not been responsive to Karen and her family. The local office added a layer of bureaucracy between us and those who make policy decisions concerning her funding.

We have to reapply every year for dwindling support dollars and complete intrusive forms the ministry devised in an attempt to judge families with the most severe circumstances. We all need support when it is asked for. Stop wasting our time. Filling out forms takes a lot of

time, stress and worry.

This year MCSS came out with forms as an add-on to the application form for special services at home. It asks questions about the stress levels of families, whether they are single, married, divorced, separated or other. It asks about their ability to cope. It asks for the severity of the disability. These are all really negative comments we're faced with having to fill out and that's wearing us down. We need support and something bright to look forward to, not intrusive forms every time we apply for funding.

Why not establish an individualized direct funding mechanism and include it as part of Karen's monthly income from her family benefits allowance? One can look to Alberta as an example of how the Conservative government has successfully implemented this type of system. It has been in place since 1987. We've heard a lot about the shortfalls of that system, but I think it might be a good base to work from. It's something we shouldn't disregard completely. I think we should pick the good points from what's happening in Alberta. It was a Conservative initiative. I think maybe the Conservatives could get some helpful pointers from that direction.

Offer tax breaks or tax deferrals to people who are disabled and own their own homes, as is now being considered for seniors in this province. Do not create policies like the home equity policy that the NDP was about to implement in 1993, which would penalize people for

owning their own homes.

We don't want the SSAH program or any individual direct funding shifted over to the Ministry of Health. We don't want Karen to be part of a health care system where the emphasis is on viewing a person's needs by their diagnosis or deficits. We have experienced this situation through home care. Programs must stay with

MCSS regardless of its present shortcomings.

The time for change is now. You are familiar with Karen's story. The struggle we face with the government in order to obtain adequate funding for her support is disgraceful. We are not alone with our struggle. Thousands of other families share our reality. Time is running out. Mom is getting older and we are weary of dealing with faceless bureaucrats who only seem interested in protecting their jobs. We hold the standing committee accountable and responsible to take action to help us. Take courage to make the important and necessary changes. Karen and thousands of other people with disabilities are counting on you.

We have applied again this year for special services at home funding. On January 22 this year we received a letter from the North Bay area office stating: "Funding is limited and only individuals and families with high-priority needs will get funding. Those with lesser needs

will be placed on a waiting list."

If Karen's special services at home funding is denied, Karen will no longer be able to go for her swim and exercise at the pool and meet new friends. She would be forced to accept home care which cannot respond to her needs. If the government fails to change the system, Karen's future looks bleak. Our vision of Karen living in her own home surrounded by friends and family will not be realized. Instead her life will be controlled by residential staff, day program staff, group home managers, program supervisors, executive directors, unions and board members. Decisions that affect her life would be made by local planning groups far removed from Karen and her family.

My family and I must keep our promise not to institutionalize my sister. Make the changes now so that Karen and many other people with disabilities have a brighter future to look forward to. Thank you.

Mrs McLeod: I'm not sure that there are many questions. I think you've told the story clearly and you've

really left it back with us to say, "What can we do to get the kind of support you need that makes so much sense

to provide?"

If I were to ask you a question, it would be to maybe come back to your sense of a plan for the future of your sister. She would need some paid support, I would imagine, as opposed to just somebody who would live in the house and provide care in return for room and board. I'm wondering what estimate you might make of the dollars that would be required to provide support so she could continue to live in the family home.

Ms Vernon: This is our present plan, and as you know, plans change, things develop: As it sits right now, we thought that Karen and our family would be able to find someone to come and live with her to provide the supports in exchange for room and board. It hasn't entered discussion, about paying that person more. We have talked about her family benefits allowance and we have talked about individualized funding so that this care provider would not be her care provider for 24 hours a day, like mom is now.

Right now Karen goes out three mornings a week. We have a vision, and Karen has said she would like to be able to go out more often too, where she would do different things, other than swimming at the pool. We could see paid support for that coming from the government and the other support would be supported by Karen and the trust fund that we've established.

Mrs McLeod: Could you tell me why you say so categorically that you don't want the SSAH program or any individual direct funding program shifted over to the

Ministry of Health?

Ms Vernon: We see that the Ministry of Health's mandate, as it sits right now, is to look at a medical model in supporting people, and although Karen has some medical needs, we feel they are adequately addressed through her physician and her medications that she takes now to control her epilepsy. The types of support we're looking for are more in a social context. We don't want the focus on her medical condition or home care. They call it "deficit," not being able to do certain things. We want a ministry that recognizes people's abilities rather than their weaknesses.

Mrs McLeod: So you think the frustrations with the Ministry of Health would be even greater than you've had with the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Ms Vernon: It would be a major headache, because not only would we be talking about a funding issue, but we would also be talking about a philosophical issue. I think that's a much harder battle to win, especially if the system is full of medical professionals who know best.

Mrs Boyd: I agree with you and I think most advocates of the disabled agree with your positioning on this. In fact, I think we lost a huge battle when long-term care went over strictly to health instead of the joint kind of work that it was with community and social services and health care. Because you're right: Once you apply only medical model criteria to something, you're really looking at a very different level of support.

The other thing that's important to recognize is that you and your family really represent a point of view that

is very different from the point of view of a lot of parents and, supposedly, their children in the system. You'll know that many families have fought very hard to maintain their children in institutions and have fought very hard to maintain the funding for the supported workshops, even though I think your experience with the workshop and Karen's experience with the workshop and Karen's experience with the workshop — it lasts only so long for most people and then it feels like a dead end for a lot of people, yet when you try and take money out of the workshops to put into this more forward-thinking program, there certainly are a bunch of other people who really fight that very hard. You must have faced that in your own community. Your parents must have faced it with the association for community living.

Ms Vernon: I come with an interesting perspective, because not only do I have a sister who is developmentally handicapped, but I have worked in the profession for about 20 years and I have worked for service agencies that provided residential and vocational services to adults with disabilities. I've worked with supporting families who are not part of a system around getting special services at home and adequate funding and I presently work in an institution, where I see a lot of waste.

Incidentally, just this last week, supervisors there received a raise, and this is in a place that is scheduled to close. There are 27 supervisors in this one place. It's between \$3,000 and \$4,000 a year raise and I added it up and it's \$168,000 of money that families could dearly benefit from.

Aside from that, I think if we had success with our plan, it might be a model for other parents to look towards and to find hope that there is another method of support. Forty years ago, most parents looked to the institution as the model of support. That wasn't in our family's vision. Our family's vision was to build something different. When that came, it didn't quite fit Karen's situation, so we just kept going. We kept the vision going and tried to find something that did fit. That's why we were so happy to find special services at home, because it was individualized and Karen and mom could direct the type of support where it's needed, when it's needed, and it works well. I think that type of mechanism could work well for people if it was made available.

Mrs Boyd: Frankly, it was the kind of advocacy you've done around the trust provisions for the house that kept us from implementing what was presented by the ministry as a really great way to cut people off.

Ms Vernon: You see, as families learn from one another, there's no greater source of information than from other families. We are part of a larger network of families. We share our successes and we share things that look possible and bright and things that might work for each other of us. If it's something that can work for our family, I think other families can learn from that and develop a plan, especially the older parents who are wondering what to do.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): Thank you very much for coming and thank you for the story. It's well documented and it speaks directly to the issue.

In my riding I've been dealing with a lot of proposals on this line about individual funding. I don't know if I'm won over to the whole thing, but I certainly appreciate the concerns. There needs to be a move from our government, in my opinion, to have individualized funding available. When we look at that, though, it's got to come from somewhere, possibly not new dollars but taking it from the existing system.

Then there are problems on the other side. Individuals such as yourself or families who have been involved with the association for community living have been dissatisfied with their association because they're not getting a voice on doing different programs for individual children. What happens is that they're not satisfied with what's

happening, obviously.

I want to talk a little bit about the mechanics, though, if we do something like this and we change our focus, taking away from programs and into individualized funding. Could you tell us a little bit about your experience? Who set up the plan for Karen? How did it work? Your mother's getting older. How do we address that situation? Your mother's probably the driving force or the control behind this. When your mother's no longer able to do that, can you give us some examples how you see that being realized for Karen to continue on?

Also, in your opinion, how do we address the problem where those families — maybe they're not like you, maybe they're not like your mother — aren't able to make that decision for the individual who's on disability or on an individualized program? Could you give us

some suggestions?

Ms Vernon: That's a well-packed question. First, to address where the money is going to come from, I think I hit on it a little bit in the brief when we talked about the area offices. I don't think we need to focus just on institutions. We all know that institutions are closing. We all know that making that shift is going to save millions of dollars.

I think we also have to look to the area office to see how efficiently that process is working for individuals or not working for individuals. I believe there are 13 area offices around the province and each one has a program manager and a different number of special agreements officers. The list goes on with the number of people who are employed in each area office. Maybe we should look at how things were run before the 1980s when a lot of people felt that was an efficient way of running things.

Looking at agencies and certainly looking at institutions, I think there could be a lot of money realized there if institutions close on schedule, if there aren't any delays or problems. When we look to agencies and programs there, I think we need to look at administration fees. We know that some agencies run special services at home programs through their agencies. We've said they shouldn't charge any administrative fees. We know that some are 10%, 12%.

We know that the Chedoke hospital in Hamilton, which refused to give over the program to families — it's really hard for families to self-administer the program in

the Hamilton area. We know the administrative fees there are 28% and that's money that's taken away from families. There are over 1,000 families right now on waiting lists. That might be another way of addressing their funding dilemmas.

How we got discussion going around planning for Karen's future, that hasn't been easy. It's been very difficult for my mom to look at her mortality. It's not a comfortable subject to talk about the demise of a major caregiver, but we've passed that hurdle. It has developed in the last six or seven years; it didn't evolve quickly. A lot of the planning happened around the dining room table and if we weren't sure of something — especially when we were looking at setting up a discretionary trust fund, we weren't sure how that worked so we called in a person from a life insurance company who's very well versed in all of this and we called in our family lawyer, who also came to our dining room table and helped us with that.

So 99.9% of the discussion happens in Karen's home around the dining room table and if we need advice or suggestions, we're resourceful, we're creative, we call in people. We've called upon our local association. We didn't know initially what to pay our workers for Karen's support so we went to our local association and learned that they pay anywhere between \$11 and \$16 an hour. We thought \$10 sounded reasonable; we didn't go the going rate. But now the North Bay area office is telling us that we can only pay our workers \$8.30 an hour and these same workers have been with Karen for years. To say to them, "The government is telling us to pay you less for the same level of support," we can't do that. That's part of our appeal.

We know that institutional workers, support workers who work with disabled people in institutions, make over \$18 an hour with benefits, with mileage, plus, plus. We know that agency staff make anywhere between \$11 and \$16 an hour. So it's how much you want to know and how resourceful you can be. But we've also found that Family Alliance Ontario, which is a network of families across the province who come with a wealth of information from different backgrounds, we've learned a lot through them. That has been a major part of our support too, especially around appealing with our appeal letters.

It's informal — I mean, there's no technical, mechanical way of doing it. It evolves, it changes, it melds to the person. There's a lot of natural things that happen in all of that. So it's tailored to each person and each family and circumstances.

The Chair: Ms Vernon, I want to thank you on behalf of the committee for your eloquence and the moving way in which you've told us the story of your family. We commend you and your family for the courage you display every day.

Ladies and gentlemen, this brings our hearings to a close. The next committee meeting is February 3 at 3:30 pm.

The committee adjourned at 1754.

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#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Chair / Président: Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview L)
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville L)

\*Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole L)

\*Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent PC)

\*Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview L)

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside ND)

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville L)

\*Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock PC)

\*Mrs Helen Johns (Huron PC)

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew PC)

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine ND)

\*Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William L)

\*Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York PC)

\*Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain PC)

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand PC)

\*Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex PC)

\*In attendance / présents

#### Substitutions present / Membres remplaçants présents:

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre / -Centre ND) for Ms Lankin

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur L) for Mr Duncan

Mr Gary L. Leadston (Kitchener-Wilmot PC) for Mr Preston

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea PC) for Mr Jordan

Clerk / Greffière: Ms Tonia Grannum

Staff / Personnel: Mr Ted Glenn, research officer, Legislative Research Service

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#### Standing committee on social development (1st Session

## 36th Farliagent

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Monday 3 February 1997

Funding for persons with disabilities

Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped; Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee

Mr David Baker

Mr David Lepofsky

#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York PC)

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain PC)

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand PC)

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex PC)

Substitutions present / Membres remplaçants présents:

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce PC) for Mr Preston

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur L) for Ms Castrilli

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth PC) for Mr Smith

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge) for Mrs Munro

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East / -Est) for Mr Pettit

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea PC) for Mr Jordan

#### Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes:

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre / -Centre ND)

Clerk / Greffière: Ms Tonia Grannum

Staff / Personnel: Mr Ted Glenn, research officer, Legislative Research Service

The committee met at 1533 in room 228.

<sup>\*</sup>In attendance / présents



#### FUNDING FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Consideration of the designated matter pursuant to standing order 125 relating to the impact of the Conservative government's funding and funding cuts on persons with disabilities and their families.

#### ADVOCACY RESOURCE CENTRE FOR THE HANDICAPPED

#### ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT COMMITTEE

The Vice-Chair (Mr Dwight Duncan): I call the committee to order. We have one delegation today to speak to the committee, a group called ARCH, led by David Baker, executive director, David Lepofsky, co-chair, and Steven Kean. Gentlemen, welcome. Please read your name into the record as you begin to speak.

Mr David Baker: Thank you very much. My name is David Baker. I'm executive director of ARCH. With me, and I will explain later the relevance of their participation, are David Lepofsky, co-chair of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, and Steve Kean from the ODA committee. We'll be referring to three documents which I hope you have before you. The first one is headed Impact of Funding and Funding Cuts on Persons with Disabilities and their Families; the second is ARCH Alert; and the third is Enact the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Before Imposing Provincial Budget Cuts.

I'll be leading off. On behalf of ARCH's president, Ron McInnes, I would like to thank the members of the committee for inviting ARCH to present. We were pleased to have been invited, notwithstanding that we had not applied to present.

ARCH is a legal centre serving Ontario's disabled community. We have 55 member organizations representing most of the provincial disability organizations in Ontario, and we have representation from all disabilities and regions across the province. Notwithstanding that membership, ARCH rarely takes a position directly on an issue. Our role, as you will see today, is to provide information to disability organizations, serve as legal counsel to them, and represent individuals.

With respect to the committee's deliberations, we know that you have already heard from a number of disability organizations represented on our board of directors and also from coalitions we serve as legal counsel. What we propose doing is raising two issues with you briefly, and then I intend to address you in a different capacity, as legal counsel to the ODA committee, which is here represented by my colleagues.

The two issues we thought it would be useful to raise with you as points of information are two areas where the government has actually increased funding in the area of disability. We thought it was important to present these, but also to present what in practice is happening in those areas.

The first one, and I'll refer to them very briefly, concerns the relationship between housing and long-term care or attendant care for people with disabilities. This is an area where the government has committed significant additional resources, and we know that there is increasing demand in this area as hospitals close and also as the population ages and the number of people who require this kind of service increases.

What we wanted the committee to be aware of was the fact that there is an organization -- it happens to be in Waterloo -- where the government has committed an additional \$800,000 to provide attendant care services to people with disabilities. This organization has a long, long waiting list -- they estimate 25 years -- for these kinds of services. These are people who are in chronic care hospitals or other, often acute care, hospitals, waiting for this service.

The problem, in a nutshell, is this: With the disappearance of supported housing and rent-geared-to-income housing, there are only two people off the waiting list who are able to pay the rents that must be paid at market level in order to live in the community with the benefit of this attendant care. So these are people who, unfortunately, carry on in much more expensive forms of care because



they cannot afford the rents that must be paid in order to benefit from this excellent program. The program is concerned, because they are going to have most of their budget unspent at the end of the year, that the money will be taken away on the basis that the need is not there, but the need obviously is there. There's an enormous waiting list for services of this kind. It's the kind of thing which the hospital restructuring committee recommends should be happening. A dilemma.

#### 1540

We present the facts; we ask you to think about the implications of that. But clearly the government policy is not working out for the people it's designed to benefit in the way the government presumably intended it should.

The other area, which commences at page 4 of the brief, concerns education. You may be aware that the funding structure for most grants to school boards is on a per-registered-student basis. There is a special education component and a general component to the amount which is transferred to each school board by the province. The amount transferred as part of the special education component has actually increased with this government. The general component of the transfer to the school boards, of course, has been substantially reduced.

Because these grants are not based on actual expenditures, there is nothing at first glance that would prevent school boards from doing what is in fact happening out there, which is that a massive, disproportionate percentage of the cuts is affecting people with disabilities. The aides that permit students to be integrated into regular classes are being cut, special classes are being cut, and specialized services such as speech and language pathologists and psychologists are being cut by school boards.

I suppose the question one might raise is, what does this have to do with the provincial government? Well, under the Education Act, subsection 8(2), the Minister of Education is responsible to ensure that each and every exceptional pupil in the province is receiving an appropriate education, with appropriate special education programs and services. Under Ontario regulation 306, the ministry is required to receive plans that will outline the programs that are to be provided and any changes in the programs, and the ministry must approve those changes.

What is happening is that while the province is pointing, justifiably, to the fact that money is being increased for special education, the reality, as could easily be determined by looking at the plans, is that the programs are being massively cut for exceptional pupils, notwithstanding the increase in funding. The question I would ask is, is the minister prepared to use the authority the minister has to insist that the provincial grants be reflected in the way in which programs are delivered to exceptional pupils?

Those points of information being over, I would like to turn to Mr Lepofsky, who is co-chair of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee. ARCH serves this committee as legal counsel, and this is the only coalition which ARCH represents in this way which has not already presented to you. Mr Lepofsky has received the Order of Canada. If I may refer to the statement made at the time, Mr Lepofsky "has used his professional knowledge to work tirelessly to protect the rights of disabled people. He has helped to educate and sensitize the general public and legislators to the obstacles faced each day by disabled persons."

Without any further ado, I'd like to turn things over to him. He'll be referring to the third brief in front of you.

Mr David Lepofsky: Thank you very much, Mr Baker, and thank you to the committee for this opportunity. I begin by indicating two things: First, although I am a public servant, I am appearing in a personal capacity, not purporting to speak on behalf of my employer. Second, while Mr Baker has indicated that I have been honoured by my country for the work that I have done in this field, I hope that today constitutes an effort at continuing the responsibility I have undertaken by accepting that award, by seeking to assist in the education of this committee about barriers that we face as people with disabilities.

Let me introduce us by indicating first what the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, of which I



am co-chair, is. We are a voluntary, non-profit, non-funded coalition of individuals and community organizations which has united together for one purpose, and that is to secure the passage in Ontario of a new law which will achieve a barrier-free society for people with disabilities, a law we call the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. In making our presentation today, we wish to draw upon the knowledge and the expertise which our coalition uniquely has, involving more than 40 of our major community disability groups as well as hundreds of individuals with disabilities from across this province.

We wish to build upon the presentations you've heard up until today and to communicate a very simple, clear message. Our message is this: The cuts which the government has imposed have had a disproportionately harmful impact on people with disabilities in this province; those cuts have hurt the most vulnerable of the citizens of this province; those cuts have been planned and implemented or will be implemented in a fashion which is not designed to avoid this adverse disproportionate impact; the harms that those cuts will impose on us are preventable; and the way in which they could best be prevented would be for the government to pass an Ontarians with Disabilities Act before it undertakes its program of cuts and restructuring so that the act we seek can achieve that which is not being achieved now, and that is a government process of reorganization in a fashion which does not create new barriers for us.

Let me turn first, to make these points, to explain what an Ontarians with Disabilities Act would be. People with disabilities, it is trite to say, face numerous barriers in seeking access to all aspects of Ontario life, whether in public transit, education, jobs, government or private services and the like. The fact of the matter is that it hurts our society that these barriers exist. It hurts the 17% of the public who have disabilities and it hurts the rest of you who during your lives will acquire a disability to have these barriers remain. Indeed, in fighting to remove these barriers we are fighting a battle not only for us but for those of you are still, temporarily, able-bodied. It also hurts our society for these barriers to remain because our society loses the advantage of the potential of people with disabilities who wish to contribute and suffers the costs of maintaining us outside the workforce, more often than not when we want to be inside the workforce as taxpayers and contributing members of society.

With this problem in place, what do we need done? We need two things done: We need old barriers that now exist identified and torn down; we need new barriers prevented before they are created. Aren't there any programs on the books to do this now? Well, we have programs and laws. We have the Human Rights Code and the Charter of Rights and the like, but 15 years of experience proven that they do not solve the problem. Many, if not most, of the old barriers are still there and many new ones are coming along. We know these programs and legislation, while important, aren't good enough. What about voluntary measures? No one with any real-life experience with a disability believes that voluntary measures work. They hadn't worked until this government was elected, and this government's program of voluntarism in this field for the past year and a half has not changed things one iota for the better.

What we need is a new law, a new law we propose to call an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. It would have as its objective the achievement of a barrier-free society for people with disabilities by the year 2000. It would achieve this by requiring old barriers to be removed and new barriers to be prevented, all in a cost-effective way. Our proposal is not novel. There is an international trend around the world in favour of such legislation. Alas, Canada and Ontario specifically are lagging woefully behind that trend.

What is the government's position on this issue? During the last election, as is included as the last page of our brief, Premier Harris made a solemn pledge in writing. He promised that his government, if elected, would pass an Ontarians with Disabilities Act in its first term, that he would work together with us to develop it, and that new funds would be devoted to accommodation of people with disabilities. We find, after the election, that this commitment is not only one of the government's but is one which is now shared by all parties. All three parties are on record as supporting it; indeed the opposition supported a resolution, unanimously passed last May, of the entire Legislature calling for this promise to be kept.

What has the government done about this promise? Sadly, none of the three elements of it has been met. The Premier has refused to meet us, and his citizenship minister, to whom we've been directed, has only agreed to one courtesy meeting, has offered a lot of vague rhetoric, but has announced no commitment either as to when an Ontarians with Disabilities Act would be introduced or indeed as to when a public consultation might begin to develop it, much less when it might end. Put simply, the Premier has not, to



our knowledge, even authorized the citizenship minister to come forward with legislation, much less to support it when it is developed.

#### 1550

How does this affect the mandate of your committee? We say it does in two respects. First, our brief outlines seven areas in which government cuts are not only hurting people with disabilities -- and that's bad enough -- but these cuts also flatly contradict both the letter and the spirit of the Premier's solemn, written pledge to us in seeking election to his current office. Let me list these briefly.

First, an Ontarians with Disabilities Act will need a strong Human Rights Commission. The government promised to increase funding to the commission but, once elected, cut funding to the commission, and its red tape commission suggests further impediments to the enforcement of our human rights. That will undermine the capacity of the government to deliver on the Ontarians with Disabilities Act promise.

Second, the government through committing to an Ontarians with Disabilities Act knew that a core focus of that act would be accessible public services, including, as a core example, accessible public transit. Yet as you've already heard, government cuts have effectively led to a cut in paratransit services in Toronto and elsewhere, therefore working directly counter to the force that an Ontarians with Disabilities Act would have.

Third, an Ontarians with Disabilities Act would require a barrier-free workplace both in the public sector and elsewhere, yet cuts to the Ontario public service have had a disproportionate impact on government employees with disabilities and government cuts to programs within the public service have undermined the government's ability to achieve a barrier-free workplace, a workplace within the Ontario public service itself. This contradicts not only the Ontarians with Disabilities Act pledge but the Premier's promise of zero tolerance of discrimination in the Ontario public service.

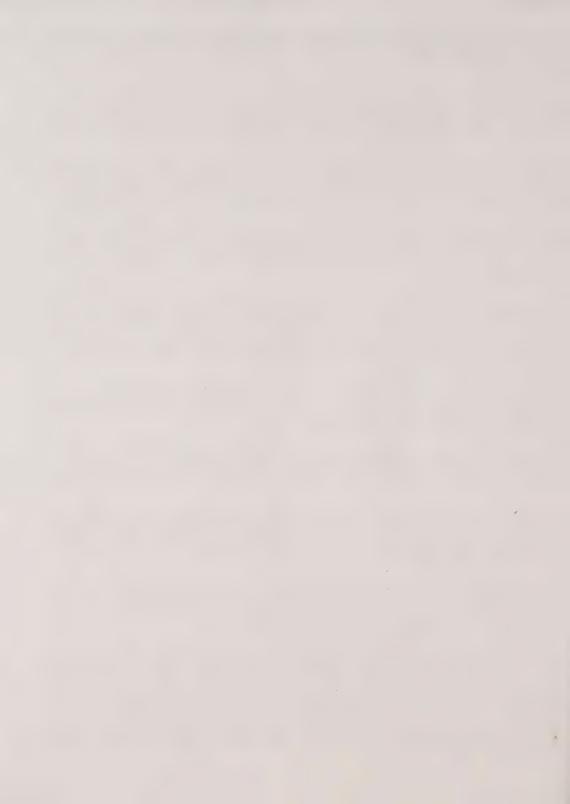
Fourth, the government's plan to offload services on the municipalities without commensurate guaranteed provincial funding to support them will disproportionately impact on people with disabilities since many of those areas, such as municipal transit, social services and long-term care, are themselves of particular importance to people with disabilities.

Fifth, privatization of government services runs the risk that people with disabilities will lose jobs in the public service in favour of private employers who may well not be prepared to employ them or to provide as barrier-free an environment as the Ontario public service now provides, albeit an imperfect one.

Sixth, as Mr Baker has outlined, cuts in the area of education -- and by analogy, one could argue, to colleges and universities -- are having a direct impact on people with disabilities, yet an Ontarians with Disabilities Act would seek to remove old barriers and prevent new ones in the education and colleges and universities system, barriers which will be left in place or exacerbated by the current process of downsizing and reorganizing.

Finally, cuts to social services, while promised not to have an impact on us, have indeed had an impact on us, as our brief documents. The first six area of cuts are likely going to drive more people with disabilities out of jobs, force them on to welfare rolls and therefore make them suffer the consequences of current welfare cuts, which they were promised to be immunized from.

One area in which the budget cuts directly affect us is that they flatly contradict specific commitments which an Ontarians with Disabilities Act would seek to achieve, but there's a second and broader impact which is equally vital. You see, all of this cutting, all of this restructuring, all of this downsizing, all of this privatizing is being done without any prior government planning or commitment to ensure that in the process the needs of people with disabilities will be met, that they will not be adversely impacted, that no new barriers will be created, that in the process of restructuring old barriers will be removed. In other words, the restructuring process on the whole will likely lead to the same kind of barrier creation that we face whenever governments go about doing anything, while forgetting our needs and not making a commitment to meet them.



To that end, it is our position that the government should first enact the Ontarians with Disabilities Act and only then undertake its program of cuts, downsizing and restructuring, because then the government will have legislatively pre-committed to do precisely that which it is not now doing, which is to ensure that its activities in this area will lead to fewer, not more, barriers for us. If you do the cuts first and pass the Ontarians with Disabilities Act second, you will create barriers that you may not be able to fix after the fact, or if you are able to fix them at all, you'll be doing it only at significant public expense, a waste of public money that we can prevent now.

Therefore, we conclude with specific recommendations, as follows:

First, we ask this committee to call upon the government to keep its commitment of an Ontarians with Disabilities Act, to guarantee a date by which it will introduce that act and to direct the Premier to meet us forthwith so we can discuss how it will be done.

Second, we ask the committee to call upon the Minister of Citizenship to replace vague rhetoric with real action, to meet with us now to devise a process for public consultations which will get this process on track.

Third, we ask this committee to call on the government to put on hold its program of cuts, downsizing, restructuring and privatization until the Ontarians with Disabilities Act is enacted and enforced, to prevent the mess before it happens.

Finally, we ask this committee to call on the government to commit, first, that its cuts, downsizing and restructuring will indeed be undertaken in a barrier-free way for us, and second, that it will appoint a body to independently monitor the process so that we can be sure that it is happening in the way it ought, not as a matter of government rhetoric but independently verified reality.

With that, we thank you for your attention and we urge this committee, in a non-partisan way, to join together, as the Legislature has in the past, to call for action on the commitment of an Ontarians with Disabilities Act so that we can replace unnecessary barriers and avoidable waste of public money with equality for people with disabilities, something about which we all ought to agree.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Thank you for coming and for all the information you've given us. I know, David Baker, that one of the things you have always expressed concern about is this multiple-impact issue that David Lepofsky raises in his whole presentation. I really thank you for giving us the ARCH Alert, because it is a way for all of us to understand the impact in many, many different areas that we obviously don't have time to talk about today.

David Lepofsky, you clearly are carrying on with your efforts to try and keep governments of whatever ilk from making the mistake of creating more barriers, especially at a time of great restructuring. Can you talk to me about some of the obvious barriers you think we're going to create with the kind of legislation the government has brought forward this term?

Mr Lepofsky: I think a couple of examples would be these: The government is undertaking restructuring of the health care system, involving shutting down some services and amalgamating others. In going through that process, even if one accepts that those cuts are appropriate -- and I'm not speaking to that; I'm simply saying even if one accepts that that is appropriate -- if the planners do not make sure that the facilities they keep open, the facilities and programs they design, are physically and programmatically accessible to us, then you're going to have a disaster before it happens.

If you offload long-term care primarily aimed at people with disabilities, social services substantially aimed at people with disabilities, on municipalities without guaranteeing funding and assured levels of service, then you're essentially ensuring that barriers will have to be created, if not due to underfunding, then due to underplanning.

Finally, if you look at the government's own internal activity within the public service, there used to be a systemic accommodation fund run by the Management Board Secretariat. It used to fund activities



aimed at identifying and removing systemic barriers in the Ontario public service. That fund has been absolutely abolished. You can't find barriers and remove them if you abolish the very fund which, in its own modest way, was there to finance such activities.

#### 1600

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): Thank you for your presentation, particularly Mr Lepofsky. I have a couple of comments and then would ask you to respond.

In terms of the OHRC restructuring, probably you will know that the previous government put \$3 million in in a one-time grant to try and reduce the caseload, and that in fact did not reduce the caseload. With the restructuring of the OHRC, the backlog is now reduced from 22 months to 16 months, so at least there's a sign of moving in that direction.

But most importantly, you refer to the ODA, because I know that is an area of real concern to you. It's interesting for me to note that in your conversations, I think with the minister if not with others, you knew that the government's first initiative was to move in the area of the vulnerable adults and also for the equal opportunity plan, and then it was to move into the area of the ODA.

I know you've politely declined to be involved in the first two initiatives because you're very much focused on ODA, and I applaud that, but if I can assure that the letter of 24 May that the Premier wrote to you indicating that the ODA "in the first term of office within the economic goalposts of the Common Sense Revolution" is still a commitment that is made by the government, I hope that will bring some comfort to you. I appreciate your anxiousness to get on with the consultation process.

In that regard, I'd like your insight into why the previous government failed to enact its own private member's bill dealing with an ODA.

Mr Lepofsky: Let me begin by correcting three misstatements in your question: Firstly, the government cuts to the Human Rights Commission have perhaps reduced the backlog, but it's been done in significant part by turning away meritorious cases. In a conversation with a professional colleague and friend who acts for defendants, respondents, he laughingly told me how he can get cases dismissed now on the most technical grounds that even he didn't think were of any merit. So when you cut budget and cut cases, you reduce backlog but you don't deliver justice. That's the first mistake.

I would note that your Premier promised during the election to take money from the Employment Equity Commission, which you abolished, and put it into the Human Rights Commission. That was an election promise that has not been met -- the opposite.

Secondly, with respect to our involvement in the equal opportunity plan, you stated that your minister told us that she was going to move first on the vulnerable adults and equal opportunity initiatives. With respect, she wouldn't even meet us for the first year, so she didn't tell us anything like that. In any event, we didn't refuse to participate in the equal opportunity plan initiative. We were asked to participate in it with 48 hours' notice, on a prior understanding that it couldn't lead to new legislation. What we said was, "We'll talk to you about it, but we'll tell you that equal opportunity plans not backed by legislation are like shooting someone in the head six times and then asking them if they prefer Tylenol or aspirin to solve their headache."

Finally, with respect to the question of the prior government, I dare say that disability is easily used as political football by any party, and we don't really want to be that football. We'd rather hear about why people will come together to pass this law than why they couldn't come together in the past to deal with it. What we would like to see is the non-partisan and bipartisan support that we've seen in the Legislature at the level of rhetoric turned into action, and if the opposition parties are prepared to support this kind of legislation, as they've said they are, we'd like to see the government, which has the policy resources it does, devote them now to the process of developing the legislation so we can get on with it.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): Mr Shea's reference to the Premier's letter suggesting that the commitment to the Ontario disabilities act still stands reminds me of an answer that was given in the



House a couple of hours ago in terms of commitments to children, that those commitments still stand, and that the reason they still stand is because they haven't been met yet. Since this is the final presentation to our committee hearings, I think it summarizes what we've heard, that the only thing that has been static in the government's policies in relationship to the disabled is the commitment to bring in an Ontario disabilities act.

I think the point you make is so well taken that your recommendations in terms of what action is needed now could form the basis of the report of this committee to government. If the act were in place before any of the cuts take place or any of the downsizing or offloading takes place, then there would be an umbrella under which we could assess the impact of those changes on the disabled.

I trust that the government members on the committee will support those recommendations as recommendations from this committee to government. If they do, it would be absolutely consistent with the commitments that have been made on the part of all three parties, as you note.

I have so many questions that I've been rapidly trying to scan the brief that you didn't get an opportunity to present in the time we had, where you raise a number of questions about the shifting in responsibility for services to the municipal level. I suspect I'm only going to be able to get in one or two, so I just want to flag for the record the fact that these questions you have raised are unanswered. Some of them have answers.

I wonder whether ARCH will address their concerns based on what answers we have, for example, on long-term care, the fact that there is to be, given what we've been told by the government, a long-term-care agency that will determine the entire budget, including the budget not only for residential care but for community care in the long-term area. We don't know what the relationship of the long-term-care agency and the CCACs will be, other than that CCACs will continue to exist, but the agency will determine budgets across the province, pool the money and redistribute it. I'm hoping that ARCH will have an opportunity to address any concerns related to that process before it becomes a fact.

**Mr Baker:** If I may briefly respond to that, ARCH Alert raises questions because we obviously don't have answers to the kinds of questions you're pointing out that must be raised. We're hoping that you and indeed all members of the committee will ask those kinds of questions so that big mistakes are not made.

The Vice-Chair: Your time is up. Thank you very much. We appreciate your presentation today.

**Mr Baker:** Thank you for the opportunity.

The Vice-Chair: Ladies and gentlemen of the committee, we have one other item of business to attend to today: an amendment to the membership of the subcommittee on committee business.

Mrs McLeod: On a point of order or information, Mr Chair: Prior to moving on to the specific amendments, I understand that three briefs have been tabled for the committee today. I first of all make an assumption that these briefs will be entered for the record of the committee and I think it's important to note them in the minutes in deference of people who people who have made the effort to write and express their concerns. One is from the Ontario Prader-Willi Syndrome Association, one is from the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada and the other is from Marlene Crawford of Windsor, Ontario, who has submitted a personal brief.

I'm also wondering whether it was not possible for those individuals to make presentations to the committee today. Is that something they had requested?

The Vice-Chair: My understanding is that by agreement of the subcommittee, all the delegations that wanted to be heard in person were heard, that others were asked to submit written briefs and that those briefs are part of the official record.

Mrs McLeod: That's fine. Thank you, Mr Chair.



The Vice-Chair: We have two motions from the opposition with respect to the official opposition's membership on the subcommittee.

Mrs McLeod: I move that the membership of the subcommittee on committee business be amended by substituting Ms Castrilli for Mr Patten.

The Vice-Chair: Any discussion? All in favour? Opposed, if any? Carried.

**Mrs McLeod:** Second, I move that the membership of the subcommittee on committee business be amended by substituting Mrs Caplan for Mr Gravelle.

The Vice-Chair: Is that supported? All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

That's all of our business for today, therefore I declare this meeting adjourned. Oh, I spoke too soon.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): It seems to me that we had allocated a certain number of hours for witnesses. If I'm correct, a couple of groups didn't show up, which says to me that we may still have some time left for witnesses. Is that correct? I'm saying that so the subcommittee is aware of that, as we had allocated a certain amount of time for witnesses to leave enough time for the committee, but I think it should be remembered that it's probably an hour. All I know is that a couple ofgroups that were scheduled didn't show up. I just think the subcommittee should be aware of that in terms of their planning.

The Vice-Chair: It's closer to half an hour. We'll refer that matter to the subcommittee. Any other business? No? Adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1611.

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Standing committee on social development



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## Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 11 February 1997 Monday 17 February 1997

Standing committee on social development

Subcommittee business

Fewer School Boards Act, 1997 Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36e législature

## Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 11 février 1997 Lundi 17 février 1997

Comité permanent des affaires sociales

Travaux du sous-comité

Loi de 1997 réduisant le nombre de conseils scolaires

Chair: Annamarie Castrilli Clerk: Tonia Grannum Présidente : Annamarie Castrilli Greffière : Tonia Grannum

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#### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Tuesday 11 February 1997

#### ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

#### COMITÉ PERMANENT DES AFFAIRES SOCIALES

Mardi 11 février 1997

The committee met at 1638 in room 151.

#### SUBCOMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Chair (Ms Annamarie Castrilli): Thank you all for coming this afternoon. We have one item of business.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): Madam Chair, I move that the membership in the subcommittee on committee business be amended by adding Mr Wildman.

The Chair: It's been moved. Seconded. All in agreement? Welcome.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Thank you.

The Chair: We are adjourned. Thank you all very much.

The committee adjourned at 1639.

Monday 17 February 1997

Lundi 17 février 1997

The committee met at 0912 in committee room 1.

#### FEWER SCHOOL BOARDS ACT, 1997 LOI DE 1997 RÉDUISANT LE NOMBRE DE CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Consideration of Bill 104, An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system, providing for certain matters related to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 104, Loi visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte, l'efficacité et la qualité du système scolaire ontarien en permettant la réduction du nombre des conseils scolaires, en créant la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation, chargée d'encadrer la transition vers le nouveau système, en prévoyant certaines questions liées aux élections de 1997 et en apportant d'autres améliorations à la Loi sur l'éducation et à la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.

The Chair (Ms Annamarie Castrilli): Ladies and gentlemen, welcome this morning. We're starting with a little bit of lateness this morning. We are waiting for some of the members; some of the members are not here, but I welcome you all. We are arranging for an overflow room because it looks like there's a great deal of interest in this subject. I'll give you details just as soon as we have the room, and you'll be able to follow the proceed-

ings from that room.

We have a procedural matter to deal with before we start with the hearings. There's a report of the subcommittee on committee business. Could I ask someone to

move it?

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): Your subcommittee on committee business met on Tuesday, February 11, and Wednesday, February 12, 1997, and recommends the following with respect to Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, 1997:

(1) That the minister and ministry staff be invited to appear before the committee for 30 minutes at the outset of public hearings on Bill 104. Of that 30 minutes, 10 minutes would be set aside for the minister's presentation, followed by a 10-minute response/question period by each of the two opposition parties.

(2) That umbrella organizations be allotted 15-minute presentation slots and that individuals be allotted 10-

minute presentation slots.

(3) That the first two days of public hearings in Toronto be set aside for umbrella organizations and that the last two days of public hearings in Toronto be set

aside for individual presentations.

- (4) That for the Toronto hearings, umbrella organizations would be chosen by the caucuses and a list of such organizations submitted to the clerk of the committee for scheduling. The caucuses would submit to the clerk of the committee a list of individual witnesses to be scheduled from the clerk's list of requests. Witnesses will be scheduled by the clerk of the committee in rounds from the lists provided by the caucuses. Cancelled slots will be filled with names from the appropriate caucus lists.
- (5) That the committee request of the House leaders permission to sit from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm instead of from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm on Tuesday, February 25, 1997.
- (6) That the deadline for groups/individuals to contact the clerk for Toronto hearings is Tuesday, February 18, 1997. Groups/individuals who call in after the deadline

for the Toronto hearings will be encouraged to send in written submissions.

(7) That the committee travel to Windsor, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Brantford and Barrie during the weeks of March 17 and March 24, 1997. Dates for each

location are subject to logistical arrangements.

(8) That the committee advertise for one day in all English-language dailies outside of Toronto and in the French language daily Le Droit and on Ontario parliamentary channel. The deadline for those who wish to make an oral presentation in the locations outside of Toronto will be Monday, March 3, 1997. The deadline for those who wish to send in written submissions will be Thursday, March 20, 1997.

(9) That the clerk has the authority to place the

advertisement in the newspapers.

- (10) That the subcommittee meet on Wednesday, March 5, 1997, to select those witnesses to be scheduled for the cities of Windsor, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Brantford and Barrie.
- (11) That the committee invite Gerald Caplan and Monique Bégin, former co-chairs of the Royal Commission on Learning, to appear before the committee in Ottawa.

(12) That the Chair will start the meeting punctually regardless of the number of members in attendance.

- (13) That the Chair, in consultation with the subcommittee, shall make all additional decisions necessary with respect to public hearings.
- (14) That the researcher will provide background information.
- (15) That each member of the committee be provided with the compendium of background information on Bill 104.
- (16) That the researcher will provide the committee with various versions of the summary of recommendations
- (17) That the clerk of the committee be authorized to schedule witnesses for the Toronto hearings if the report of the subcommittee is not adopted prior to the February 17, 1997, meeting.

Madam Chair, those are the minutes of the subcommittee meeting.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Is there any debate?

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I'm concerned, as we begin the hearings — and the hearings in my view are very limited in time duration in any event — that there are unfilled slots. I'm hoping that the recommendations of the subcommittee, which were geared to try to accommodate as many people as possible in as short a time as possible, can be seen to be implemented with some degree of flexibility.

I'm appreciative of the fact that for the clerk of the committee, given the very tight time lines in organizing, if there are some who are approached and aren't able to present and there is a rigidity in terms of names having to be drawn from the specific caucus lists, we can be left, as we are this morning, with vacant spots when we know we have a list of people wanting to present that's about 1,000 people long. I just feel that the rigidity of having to draw from each of the three caucus lists makes it

unfortunate that we cannot hear from more of those 1,000 people.

The Chair: Mr Wildman, do you want to speak to this point?

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Yes, Chair. I share the concern of my friend from Fort William. I don't understand why we would have empty slots. What we attempted to do with the very long list of between 950 and 1,000 who had already indicated they wished to make a presentation was to come up with three lists that we felt would be representative of various shades of opinion. If various members on those proposed lists are unable to present, there are lots of other people who could.

The Chair: We've had to date 1,068 groups and individuals who have asked to appear before the committee. The difficulty has been in scheduling their appearance on short notice. The clerk's office in fact —

Interruption.

The Chair: If we could have some calm, please. The clerk did in fact try to call the organizations that the three caucuses had submitted, and exhausted all of those lists. It then authorized the clerk to go into the general list of the more than 800 groups that were left in order to make sure we had a full complement for today. Organizations declined and others couldn't be reached. That's the result this morning. It isn't for lack of interest. The clerk's office worked all through the weekend to try. The difficulty has been just the very tight time frame for giving notice to the various groups.

Mrs McLeod: Given that explanation, which I accept, Friday afternoon, as it is, the time lines for beginning these hearings were very, very tight, as we all know. But if there are people here this morning who are on the list, who had called the clerk's office before the deadline and asked to make presentations and are prepared to present,

could they not be accommodated?

The Chair: I could certainly entertain a motion to amend the report of the subcommittee to allow that to happen.

Mrs McLeod: I would make such a motion.

The Chair: Is there a seconder? Could we have some

wording on the motion?

Mrs McLeod: I would move that where there are vacant spots on the day's presentations, individuals who have previously contacted the clerk's office in order to indicate their interest in making a presentation and who are able to present in those time slots be invited to present to the committee.

Mr Wildman: I second that.

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The Chair: You're suggesting that people from the

audience here who are prepared to -

Mrs McLeod: I think that would be the easiest way for the clerk to deal with it, but I'm appreciative of the fact that if there are vacant spots this afternoon, there are still 1,000 people who could be reached between now and this afternoon who might welcome the opportunity to make the presentation.

The Chair: Is that acceptable to the seconder?

Mr Wildman: Yes.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): Perhaps I could just indicate that if there are more people here than

there are slots available, we could put the names in a hat and draw at random so that's fair to everybody here.

The Chair: All right. Are we in agreement?

Mr Wildman: Agreed.

**The Chair:** Perfect. Then we will deal with the empty spots we have in that style.

Any further debate with respect to the report of the subcommittee?

**Interjection:** How many spots are there left to be filled?

**The Chair:** I believe there are three this morning and one this afternoon. Four overall.

Mrs McLeod: It might also be appropriate to indicate to people in the audience that it has been customary for committees to allow a number of individuals to jointly present. The time slot doesn't become any longer, but if there are two or three people who would want to present jointly, that's usually acceptable.

The Chair: We will allow for that possibility.

Any further debate on the subcommittee report? All in favour, as amended? Opposed? Carried.

#### STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER AND RESPONSES

The Chair: We begin this morning with the Minister of Education and Training, Minister John Snobelen. Sir, you have 10 minutes. We're grateful for your presence here. The other two parties will then have an opportunity to also speak for 10 minutes each.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Chair and members of the committee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this morning. These hearings on Bill 104, the proposed Fewer School Boards Act, 1997, are an important step towards long-overdue reforms to elementary and secondary education in Ontario.

I'd like to begin my remarks with a few words about the larger context of education reform because, as I'm sure members are aware, the provisions of this bill are part of a wider program of education reform aimed at increasing quality and raising standards.

I would like then to turn to the bill itself and to its specific provisions. These education reforms are based on extensive consultation with the people of this province that has involved 24—

Interruption.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, we must have quiet in this meeting room. I would ask you to maintain your comments to yourselves and let the minister speak for the moment.

Hon Mr Snobelen: Consultations that have involved 24 separate reviews on finance and governance in my lifetime, including two royal commissions, 10 commissions and committees, two fact-finding reports, two panels and innumerable meetings.

The reforms address people's concerns about the education system, an education system that many believe is not delivering the quality of education that our students need. It also responds to their concerns that school board spending is not accountable and that residential property taxpayers can no longer bear the burden of the year-overyear tax increases they are expected to pay.

We are building a quality education system by focusing the resources on the individual student and teacher in the classroom, developing a rigorous and relevant province-wide curriculum, setting standards that will challenge students to excel, funding education fairly so all students in Ontario have an equal opportunity, ensuring accountability to students, parents and taxpayers and investing public money wisely.

Bill 104 is a vital component that would support this process of change and help us achieve our goal of high-quality education for all students in Ontario. Its provisions will help us focus resources where they should be, on the individual student and teacher in the classroom. It will recall school boards and trustees to their traditional role as accountable and effective guardians of the quality of education. Through this renewed structure we will also be able to ensure that education funding supports a high quality of education that meets all students' individual needs regardless of where they live. There will be no second-class students in Ontario.

We will be releasing a full and detailed proposal for the new funding model later this winter. Some of the principles and features of this model have already been presented in the consultation paper, Meeting Students' Needs, that we released last September, and the input we received from these consultations will be reflected in the proposal we will bring forward.

The government also proposed that starting in 1998 residential property taxpayers will no longer pay for education. These funds will be provided through provincial grants. Business taxes would continue to contribute to education funding, but the taxes would remain in the community in which they were generated.

Ontario has watched as, one by one, other jurisdictions in Canada and around the world have reformed their education systems to manage the cost of education by reducing duplication and waste and streamlining administration and bureaucracy. We are now ready to move forward in Ontario. These much-needed reforms will allow us to focus resources on the classroom where they belong so we can implement successful reform of the curriculum and enhance the performance of our students.

In Bill 104 you have the first legislative step towards these goals. From describing the wider context of education reforms I would now to like to speak to the bill's provisions.

The bill provides for a number of initiatives: It would enable the government to make regulations establishing new district school boards. It would provide for the election of trustees to the new district boards in November 1997 and set new rules about who is eligible to serve as a trustee. It would establish the Education Improvement Commission to ensure careful implementation and a successful transition to the new district school boards.

This legislation would allow us to reduce the number of major school boards and politicians. Redefining and streamlining the number of school boards, along with reduced spending on administration and less duplication, would permit the number of major school boards in Ontario to be cut in half, from 129 to 66. Where possible, the new district school boards would follow municipal boundaries. We propose to retain the isolate and hospital boards as school authorities.

The province would have 55 English-language school boards, down from 125, and 11 French-language school boards in place of the four existing boards, 59 sections of boards and eight advisory committees. These changes would respect all constitutional rights and the tradition of local control and decision-making. Indeed, many Ontario francophones would for the first time be able to exercise the right to govern their schools through their own school boards.

We also propose using the regulatory powers that would be established by the bill to reduce the number of politicians by cutting the number of trustees at major boards from almost 1,900 to approximately 700.

Interruption.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, I appreciate that this is a critical subject and that the future of education is important to all of us, but the minister must be allowed to finish his speech. You will be given an opportunity to put your comments on the record. I would ask for your patience, please.

Interruption.

The Chair: Nevertheless, he has a right to say it, and I would ask your patience, to keep your comments to yourselves for the time being. Your time will come to make your voices heard.

Hon Mr Snobelen: Thank you, Madam Chair. The trustee's role is to provide policy direction and support, not to be hands-on, day-to-day managers in the schools.

Bill 104 also proposes new rules about who is eligible to serve as a trustee. We want to get away from the situation where those elected to serve on a board are unable to adequately represent their constituents and participate in decision-making on key issues because of potential conflicts of interest.

School board employees and their spouses would not be eligible to serve as trustees on any school board or school authority in Ontario. Running for office would be permitted if the employee takes a leave of absence.

This bill would also establish the Education Improvement Commission to make sure that the transition to the new district school boards would take place in an organized and careful way. Its proposed mandate would be to guide the process of change and to help boards plan and act responsibly during the transition.

The commission would, under the provisions of this bill, be responsible for developing and implementing a process for establishing local education improvement committees. These committees would carry out the local planning and consultation necessary to effect a successful transition to the new board structure.

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An equally important part of the commission's mandate would be to ensure that local accountability for education government is maintained through the transition period. The bill would give the commission the authority, for example, to appoint an auditor to look at the affairs of an existing school board. Boards would have to submit their 1997 budgets to the commission for approval. The commission would also monitor spending on a month-bymonth basis, with any spending by a board that exceeded the board's monthly forecast requiring the commission's approval.

I want to emphasize two points here: First, these provisions of the bill, if enacted, would not override existing collective agreements; second, the various safeguards proposed are not permanent, but would be in place only until the new district school boards are established.

To complement this mandate, it is also proposed that the commission assume a number of important responsibilities with respect to consultation and providing advice to the government. Provisions of the bill would, for example, charge the commission with the task of identifying issues related to the establishment of French-language district school boards and making recommendations to the minister on those issues.

The commission would have similar responsibilities with respect to the representation on district school boards of the interests of members of native bands which have tuition agreements with those boards, and issues relating to the distribution of the assets and liabilities of existing boards and the transfer of staff of existing boards.

It would be asked to research, consult and make recommendations on the feasibility of strengthening the role of school councils over time and of increasing parental involvement in education governance.

Interruption.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, let me caution you once more. I fully understand that there is no more critical issue than education for Ontario and for all of us. The minister must be given an opportunity to speak. I do not want to clear this room, and I will have to do that if this continues.

May I also say, for those of you who are standing, committee room 2 is now open and you'll be able to follow the feed from there if you wish to move next door

to follow the proceedings.

Hon Mr Snobelen: Thank you, Madam Chair. These are the major proposals of the bill. They would also be key parts of the structural reform of Ontario's education system. The government is committed to reforming the education system because we are committed to ensuring our children a solid foundation upon which to build their lives, a foundation upon which Ontario's future prosperity depends.

The government has made a choice. We are putting education dollars where we believe they should be: directed to students and teachers in the classroom and focused on high, province-wide standards of education, where excellence is the norm for all. We owe that to our students, who are as capable as students anywhere and have the right to a challenging education. We owe it to parents, who have the right to know that their children's education is second to none.

These reforms would be an important step in bringing the highest quality possible, and accountability to students and parents, back into the education system. In doing that, we would return public trust to the system. I therefore ask all members of the committee to support this bill. Thank you.

Interruption.

**The Chair:** Quiet, please. Mrs McLeod for the official opposition.

Mrs McLeod: I would love to have the opportunity, because of the frustration of people in the audience, to

respond to the discrepancies between the minister's stated goals for education in the wider context and the reality of the government's track record on education, but I'm going to refrain from doing that because we have only 10 minutes in which to respond and it's going to be difficult enough to condense my 90-minute initial response to this bill to some 10 minutes of introductory comments.

I'm going to focus specifically on my concerns with the bill, first of all to take issue with a statement the minister made at the very outset, which was to suggest that this bill was going to return school trustees to their traditional role. I would suggest that contrary to that, this bill is going to make local boards, local accountability

and local accessibility virtually disappear.

I believe one of the first and fundamental purposes of a local school board is to be accessible to hearing the concerns of parents and concerned citizens, and I believe that access will be virtually impossible under these newly amalgamated boards because they will be either so large geographically or so large in terms of numbers of pupils or so unworkable in terms of few numbers of trustees that it will be almost impossible for people at the local level to be able to have access to their locally elected trustee.

I also believe very strongly that that kind of accessibility is the basis for local accountability, which of course is the reason school boards exist and have existed for over 100 years in this province. If you have not got that ability to be in personal contact, to have real access to what's going on in the school system, you really, as a trustee, cannot be an effective manager or an effective decision-maker or even an effective advocate for educa-

The other reason that I think school boards are going to become unworkable under this legislation is that they will be unable to provide the local accountability for decisions that affect education of our children and people in our community.

The basis, besides accessibility, for that kind of accountability is clearly fiscal accountability. We can't consider this act without at least looking at the companion piece, which is the government's intent to take over educational funding in its entirety. The local fiscal accountability of school boards, that ability to decide how many dollars will be spent on education and how those dollars will be spent, will be essentially lost.

I wonder, as the province takes over the funding, how the province is going to decide what the needs are of each local area, how the province is going to respond to those needs. Nobody really knows how those decisions are going to be made. The minister has talked rather blithely in the past about a report, a discussion paper of the ministry which he proposes is the basis for funding. If anybody has had a chance to look at that report, you will realize it is a series of very complex questions and there are no answers yet.

If I had more time, I could spend considerable time talking about the difficulty the Ministry of Education has had in dealing with even the grants provided to one single school I know of in my riding. If it's difficult to deal with one single school, how much more difficult is it going to be to deal with the needs of over 5,000 schools in the province?

What is absolutely certain is that there will be no fiscal flexibility for individual boards when the province takes over the funding of education. I think we should all have great concern about how the decisions on funding are going to be made and how the unique needs of each school district are going to be met.

But for me, the even larger concern is what this government's agenda is in bringing forward this bill. The minister, and in fact David Cooke and Ann Vanstone in the hearings before the committee last week as they accepted the roles of co-chair of the implementation committee, indicated that this is to free education dollars for the classroom. I suggest that simply cannot be substantiated.

The minister's own report, which he used consultants to confirm so that the numbers would be seen to be accurate, indicated that the most they could find through the amalgamation process was \$150 million, and even to get the \$150 million they had to find \$9.9 million directly in classroom supplies and equipment and another \$19 million in school busing — not the administration of school busing but actual school busing of students.

We know that the Premier of this province, as late as last October, indicated that they needed to take another \$1 billion out of education. We certainly know that the Minister of Education himself has been quoted saying that education should be able to find \$1.2 billion.

I think it is easier to make these kinds of cuts when the government controls the dollars. I believe that is the real agenda of the government, to take control of educational funding so that major cuts can be made, and one of the reasons you have to have amalgamated boards that have essentially lost their effectiveness is because you can't afford to have real local accountability and truly effective advocates if your goal is to strip funding away from education.

I have great concern, over the next period of time, about who's going to be held responsible for what's going on in classrooms. I am fairly confident that the minister will say, as he has often responded to me in the Legislature: "This is not my responsibility. We still do have local boards. It is the responsibility of local boards. If you as a parent or a citizen have concern with what's going on in your classroom, talk to the local board about their priorities and how they're spending the dollars we've allocated." The boards will say in total helplessness: "We simply do not have enough dollars and we cannot meet the needs. All you have left us with are impossible decisions." My greatest concern of all is that it is the students who are going to get lost in this whole process.

I do not have time, Madam Chair - and I am watching my watch; I'm conscious of the time - to go into the government's track record on education cuts and the impact of last year's cuts, other than to say it does not give any of us much optimism for the future of education under control of the Ministry of Education under this government.

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We've seen what's happened to junior kindergarten. We've seen what's happened to adult education, with direct cuts. We've seen the intention to look at so-called out-of-classroom expenditures as being expendable, such as librarians. We have seen the government absolutely ignore the impact of the last round of cuts on class sizes and on special education.

I don't believe we have reason to be optimistic about the government's agenda in supporting truly increased quality of education. I don't know how you improve the quality of education by continuing to take away the resources it needs to provide that kind of quality and equality of opportunity.

I am concerned that we may lose local accountability altogether, because if boards are seen to be ineffective and if they have no taxation power, which is normally the basis for representation through election, the questions inevitably will be raised about why we have boards at all.

I believe public education itself is at risk in this bill. I truly believe that is the consequence of what we are beginning to deal with today. If we lose our advocates, we will lose one of the strongest bases for being able to maintain public education and speak to its goals. Without doubt, public education is at risk if we are indeed on the verge of disastrous funding cuts. That may be part of the agenda of the government, because as public education deteriorates, it will be inevitable that the pressure for increased privatization comes to be.

Applause.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, I cannot allow applause.

Mrs McLeod: We know, in specific ways we will get into in the hearings, that the legislation does prepare the way for increased privatization, specifically with the allowing of increased outsourcing, and that in the provision of more powers to parent councils, it will open the door to charter schools on a scale this province would never before have dreamt of or that I believe any jurisdiction has seen.

We will hear in the course of the hearings from parents who are absolutely committed to their children's education and to involvement in their children's education who say this is not the route to go for public education. The goal of public education, as they well know, is to provide the best quality of education we can provide to every student, regardless of ability to pay. The people we will hear from who are parents believe in that goal and want to see it supported.

I believe those are the issues we have to address in these hearings.

The Chair: Mr Wildman for the third party.

Mr Wildman: It's interesting, when we note the number of individuals and organizations who have indicated their desire to appear and make presentations before the committee and when we see the interest this morning, that the government and the government House leader in discussions about the scheduling around this bill indicated: "There's no real controversy about this bill. This is a bill that everybody supports. Lots of people are in favour of amalgamating school boards." The point is that this bill is not just about amalgamating school boards. This bill is about control of education and who controls it, who has accountability, who makes the decisions.

I think the minister betrayed his view about the education system in one of his last phrases when he said that the purpose of Bill 104 was to "return public trust to the system," as if public trust is now absent. I think the number of people here this morning indicates that they do indeed have trust in the current system, and their concern and desire to appear result from a fear about where the system is going under the aegis of this government's agenda. If there is a crisis in public trust, I think it results from what has happened in education over the last year or year and a half and what is proposed for changes in future.

The minister says he wants to return trustees to a position of accountability as true guardians of education. Frankly, I wonder who is going to run for trustee after this legislation is passed. These people will be covering school boards with very large numbers of students, some of them over very, very large geographic areas. They will have a difficult time being aware of the concerns of all their constituents, of the students, of the teachers, of the parents, yet they will continue to be held accountable for the decisions that affect the education in their schools.

They won't have the power to tax, but they will be held responsible for decisions, I suspect, around the fact that there are many classrooms today that are crowded, that don't have adequate supplies, that don't have enough textbooks, that cannot provide proper special education programs and so on. I wonder who is going to run to be trustee.

The suggestion that we are in favour of amalgamation of boards is accurate. There is a possibility for changes, but we really raise the question, what is the rush?

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): Madam Chair, on a point of order: I appreciate that the media are here, but the cameramen are shooting down on the private notes we're taking at our desks etc, which I think is not —

Mr Wildman: They're welcome to look at my paper. The Chair: I appreciate your concern, Mr Young, but that's really not a point of order. If it offends you, perhaps we could ask the cameras not to aim in the direction of the notes. Please continue, Mr Wildman.

Mr Wildman: I was saying, what is the rush? Other jurisdictions have looked at amalgamation and have brought about amalgamation of many fewer boards but they've done it over a much longer period of time. One wonders why we have to complete this process in a period of a few months: the merging of collective agreements, seniority lists, dealing with assets and debts of various boards, a very difficult task which is going to involve a lot of dislocation in the process. Why do we have to do it in such a short period of time?

It's certainly not to save \$150 million which the minister has indicated will be saved from the amalgamations. When one considers \$150 million out of a total expenditure on education annually of about \$13 billion, then one recognizes that we're talking about a 1% saving.

This is not going to significantly change the current situation in classrooms in terms of funding. What is going to change is the new funding models which are coming. The removal of education from the residential property tax, while welcome, has also an ominous edge.

We're taking \$5.4 billion off the property tax, and the minister has indicated there will be further cuts to education in 1998. I really, really wonder whether we're going to have the full \$5.4 billion covered in new grants next year. I suspect the grants will be substantially less than \$5.4 billion. We know the Minister of Finance wants another \$1 billion from education. I suspect it's going to come in lower grants so that there can be funding for the income tax cut at the expense of students in their class-rooms.

The Education Improvement Commission, so-called, has been set up to basically take control of education between now and 1998. No boards will be able to make expenditure decisions on purchases and so on over \$50,000 without the approval of the commission. Their 1997 budgets will have to be approved by the commission and can be amended by the commission, and the commission's decisions are not appealable.

We welcome the establishment of new French-language boards in the province, but I am very concerned about the geographic size of those boards and many of the boards in rural and particularly northern Ontario, and the question of representation of trustees. I understand the minister has indicated he might be willing to look at changes in the number of trustees allowed under the bill in very large geographic areas and I hope he would look very seriously at that.

I'm particularly concerned with the provision of Bill 104 which mandates contracting out of non-instructional positions, non-instructional jobs. This is the beginning of privatization of the school system. It really does discount the importance of support staff in our education system and the role they play in assisting teachers, principals and vice-principals in providing a good school atmosphere for our students. I think it is very serious when we see a situation where we have mandated in a bill the privatization of important positions within the system, particularly when you discuss with many boards who have looked at privatization and contracting out, so-called outsourcing, and have determined that it will not save money.

I don't want to be alarmist, but there is a very serious question about the safety of kids if we have people who work on short-term contracts in a school and we don't know who they might be and what their problems might be. This is a very serious concern and I think we must look very carefully at it.

Overall, the government is determined to take control of education away from local authorities. This hurts accountability. It makes it more difficult for parents and students, the community, to ensure they have control over their local school system and have access to it or have their questions answered. This is about taking control and taking money out of the system — further cuts to education, a system that has already suffered from significant cuts. I'm very worried about Bill 104 in the total context of the government's agenda for cuts to education.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Wildman, and thank you, minister, for appearing before us. I would remind those present that the room next door is available. It has the same feed, so you'll be able to follow the proceedings. Mr Prins from the clerk's office is next door to take your

names if you wish to be slotted in one of the empty spaces for today. We'll make sure we accommodate as many people as possible.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Madam Chair, before moving on — I don't want to hold up the proceedings, but I have a question of process. Unfortunately, Frances Lankin is ill today and I'm covering for her, but it's my understanding that the subcommittee made a decision that organizations would appear this week. I notice that on the last page of the agenda for today, at 5 pm, Spiro Papathanasakis, a school board trustee from ward 7, is listed, but all the other names on here are organizations. I wonder if you could clarify this. I know there are a number of trustees from a number of wards who wanted to get on but were told they had to wait, if they weren't representing their board, until a further time. I wonder if I could have some clarification on that.

The Chair: I can explain to you what's happened. You're quite correct. The decision of the subcommittee was to have organizations on the first two days and the individuals on the subsequent two days. The subcommittee also decided that the organizations would be ones that would be presented by the various caucuses, and in fact Mr Papathanasakis was on the government list as an organization.

Ms Churley: But he isn't.

The Chair: It was the government list and we went through it —

Interruption.

**The Chair:** Please, ladies and gentlemen, I've got to be able to hear the concern.

**Mr Wildman:** Surely his organization, so-called, is already represented through David Moll, who is appearing at 11:15 this morning.

The Chair: Again, it was because it was on the list that we took from each of the caucuses. We exhausted all of those lists before we went to anything else.

Mr Wildman: Perhaps the two of them could appear together.

Ms Churley: I would like to submit, Madam Chair, that this is an oversight or a problem. As I said, there are other trustees, individual trustees, who wanted the same privilege this week who were told they had to wait because they weren't representing the board. I think it's unfair to have one trustee out of all of them allowed to present as an individual trustee, not representing the board. I submit that this person should be removed and put in at a later date with other trustees.

Mrs McLeod: Chair, just adding to the discussion, the way in which we've attempted to accommodate not only the 1,068 people who called the clerk's office but also the organizational stakeholder groups directly impacted by this legislation that we felt should be accommodated — the reason we were attempting to have two different types of presentations, as you know, was to have as many individuals as possible from the one list accommodated in shorter time segments and to allow a slightly longer time segment for those who were representing their organization.

I have to say that when the subcommittee had that discussion, I was part of it. I was rather appalled to find out at our subsequent meeting that the government's list

did not include virtually any of the organizations that were directly impacted by the substance of the bill. So for the government to use that framework in which to bring forward essentially individuals who are not representative of that organization I think really does betray what we were trying to do at the outset.

Mr Wildman: Just on a very important one here, in asking for various organizations to come forward as we've done, surely it is not the committee's role to choose who represents those organizations. Surely it's up to the organizations themselves. So when we invite the Toronto Board of Education, we don't invite Mr Moll. We invite the Toronto Board of Education, and since he's the chair, I guess the board has decided that he should appear on behalf of the board. It's not up to us to decide who appears on behalf of the board.

The Chair: The clerk only follows the directions that she's given. The three caucuses submitted lists to the clerk and the clerk simply followed through with that, based on an agreement among the caucuses. I understand the point you're trying to raise. I'm not sure if it's possible at this point to ask that the two presentations of

which you speak be collapsed into one.

Mr Skarica: This is the first time I've heard Mrs McLeod's complaint, but it looks like that's something we can perhaps deal with in a subcommittee meeting, at lunch or whatever. I think we're wasting a lot of time talking about process when we could get to the witnesses.

The Chair: In fact, this issue does come up tomorrow, so if it would be agreeable with the subcommittee to meet over lunch to decide the matter, we could proceed. Ms McLeod, is that agreeable with you?

Mrs McLeod: Very well.

#### PEOPLE FOR EDUCATION

The Chair: Our first presenter is People for Education, Annie Kidder. Welcome. You have 15 minutes for a presentation. Any time that you don't use up will be open for questioning from the three caucuses.

Mr Wildman: I don't like to be picky, but this really doesn't look like John Snobelen, so I think the sign could

be removed.

Ms Annie Kidder: I am not John Snobelen.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Wildman, for pointing that out.

Ms Kidder: I have glasses — that's how you can tell the difference — and not quite such a good suntan.

Thank you very much for letting me speak here today. I feel especially privileged because I know so few parents are going to be allowed to speak. I hope you all understand that over 1,000 parents have applied to be witnesses at these hearings and more are applying every day because they don't know that the spaces are already full. Over 1,000 parents have applied and only 60 individuals will be heard, at most. What I want to do today is explain a bit about why I'm here and who People for Education is and then what we feel about Bill 104.

I'm here, first of all, because I'm a parent. I have two girls in school. One is four years old and she's at junior kindergarten this morning. She's in junior kindergarten because she's lucky enough to live in a place that still has junior kindergarten, unlike a lot of other parts of Ontario.

My other daughter is nine and she's spending the day today at the Kiwanis festival. This morning she's performing with her recorder group from her school — I'm missing it and she'll never forgive me — and this afternoon she's singing with her school choir. She can do this because she's lucky enough to have a music program at her school, unlike many other children in Ontario, unlike the children in Wellington county, for instance, or Lambton county separate schools or Frontenac, Carleton or York region separate schools, just to name a few places where elementary school music programs have been cut completely.

So I'm here first because I'm a parent but then I'm also here to speak for a lot of other parents. It's very important that you listen, because those parents aren't going to get a chance to speak because these hearings are so short. It's important that you all listen. I don't just mean that the government has to listen. I think it's important that the opposition members listen also because these are parents who really need their MPPs to represent

them now.

I know Mr Snobelen mentioned all the consultation that he's done. A lot of these parents are people whose vision of the consultation that's happened around the province has been police barring parents from actual access to the Minister of Education while he stages consultation with 10 handpicked parents.

So I'm here for parents like Linda Sinclair in Nottawa, who thought she was getting a new school this year. Ten years ago her child's school was deemed as needing replacement. They fought for 10 years to get approval for a new school. The year before last they finally got their approval; last year they lost it when the government froze all new school construction. Then in January Mr Snobelen announced with much fanfare that he was unfreezing the funds for new schools and for school repairs. Nottawa's school was once more approved, the survey crews went out, and then weeks later the money was all refrozen because of Bill 104 and the Education Improvement Commission, which I will get to later.

I'm here for parents like Bev Rizzi in Thunder Bay whose son Christopher has special needs. He's been integrated into a regular class for the last couple of years. Before last year, he had enough help in that class. Last year, his special education support teacher time was cut to 30 minutes a day. The rest of the day he's just left on his own. Next year he's going to have to travel an hour and a half by bus to get the help he needs.

I'm here for Trish Eisenhour in Dowling, which is north of Sudbury, where her kids and the kids in her community describe their school as being on welfare because there's not enough equipment. There's not enough paper for art, there aren't enough books. There are 42 kids in her grade 7 and 8 class. They've cut all the extracurricular sports and they may lose their special education teacher next year.

I'm here for Suzanne Hotson in Pakenham. She has one child with special needs who's bused to Ottawa, but

her special class may be cut next year. The librarian has already been cut at her other child's school in Lanark, so the library is now run very sporadically by volunteers. She talked a lot about how low teacher morale was also at both her children's schools.

I'm here for all of these parents because they're feeling a bit invisible right now. They hear Mr Snobelen continue to say that 50% of the money spent on education is spent outside the classroom. He continues to say that only 1.8% of the education budget was cut in the last year and that it's the boards' fault that these cuts have inadvertently affected the children. They feel invisible because they hear people saying that the promise not to cut classroom spending has not been broken.

These parents know that when you talk about what's spent on the classroom, you can't leave out, which they do when they say this 50%, the principal and the vice-principal, the library and the librarian, the music and the gym teachers, the learning centre teachers, the speech pathologists, the ESL teachers and the building. You can't leave these things out when you're talking about classroom spending.

These parents know that in some boards they lost as much as 23% of their provincial education grant last year, so that there was nothing left to cut but teachers and services for the children. They know that classroom spending has been cut all over the province and they know that it continues to be cut.

Up to now, the one thing these parents had going for them was local representation and now they're in danger of losing that too.

Just as an aside here, I was going to explain who People for Education is. We are parents from public and separate schools who believe in fully publicly funded education. We believe that education is not like a business and that the financial bottom line is not the most important thing.

We don't hate change. There are lots of parents in People for Education who've been fighting for changes in the education system for a long time, but we think the process by which change is made is very important. What's scary to us right now is that huge changes are being made to the education system, but we're not getting a chance to see what the whole plan is. So it's very frightening that the very first part of the plan is to take away local representation. Who are we going to have to speak for us about all these things that we know are happening to our kids?

Bill 104 will do a lot of things. It's going to create some very big boards. I got a letter from a trustee in Cochenour the other day who said now her board was going to be Canada's fourth-largest province. There will be two boards in northern Ontario that are reach the size of France. The Toronto mega-board will serve a population greater than all four Maritime provinces put together. It's hard to believe that boards this big will be more efficient and it's even harder to believe that these giant boards will be able to represent individual parents. What is it going to mean for people, for instance, who have to drive nine hours to their board office, which some people will have to do?

Bill 104 doesn't only make these big huge boards, but then it cuts the number of trustees who will serve on them.

Interiection.

Ms Kidder: Excuse me? I think this is very important. Thank you.

It not only makes these huge boards, but then it cuts the number of trustees who will serve on them. Then it cuts their pay down to nothing and it takes away all of their power. To me, it feels like what we're going to end up with is just big, huge bureaucracies but not school boards. School boards are school boards because they are run by elected representatives, but the trustees will no leavest he ways its the beards.

longer be running the boards.

Another part of Bill 104 has to do with school councils. Mr Snobelen has already stated that he wants all schools to be legally required to have school councils. Bill 104 states that the Education Improvement Commission, the EIC — which I will get to in a minute — is to figure out how to strengthen the role of school councils and increase parental involvement in education governance. This is all very worrying to parents, on many levels. For one thing, how do you make it a law that people have to volunteer for something? What are they going to do with the schools where they can't find people to be on parent councils? We heard there were actually going be press gangs.

For another thing, as a parent who has been very involved at my school for a number of years, I know how fractious PTAs can get. The parent association in the school right next to ours, for instance, has just had a large internal fight and the whole executive has resigned. This isn't uncommon. I've heard of PTA meetings where the police have had to be called. Parents are very passionate about their own children. What would happen in a situation like that, where the whole executive resigned, if the parents were actually running the school?

There are many other parts of Bill 104 that are worrying — that are especially worrying when it's not at all clear what's going to come next — but the most worrying part to me is the Education Improvement Commission. I am not an expert, but I have read this legislation over and over and it seems to give practically unlimited powers to a small body of unelected people. It says that they will continue to exist at the pleasure of the Lieutenant Governor and it talks about them making annual reports. I know Mr Snobelen said that they were there only as a transition, but it is nowhere written in the bill that they will stop existing when school boards are established. What it does in the bill is it establishes education improvement committees, which Mr Snobelen didn't say would stop existing when the school boards are established. It would be nice to know some kind of real date as to their length of existence.

Mr Wildman: Their appointments are for three years.
Ms Kidder: Their appointments are for three years, I just heard.

The Education Improvement Commission is empowered to oversee the amalgamation of school boards, as you know. All the boards' budgets have to be approved by them and if they don't like a budget they can demand that it be changed. They will decide how

many trustees boards have. They can audit boards and they are to decide what services should be outsourced by boards. This is where we, as parents, are in danger of losing our custodians and our librarians, maybe even the principals and vice-principals. Who knows? Maybe music and phys ed too will be deemed outsourceable. It actually states in the legislation that decisions of the commission are final and not subject to review by court.

I already mentioned the problem with new school construction. This is because the Education Improvement Commission has to approve all capital expenses over \$50,000 and their powers are retroactive, so they are deemed as having been in place since January 13. No money can be spent without their approval, but they don't exist yet so no money can be spent, period, and this is

happening all over Ontario.

The Education Improvement Commission has the power to establish smaller education improvement committees which have all of these same powers. What it seems like from all this is that the work of boards will still be done; it's just that now it will be done by people we don't elect and so who are not accountable to us in any way. We'll have a lot of inaccessible bureaucrats working for a higher echelon of inaccessible bureaucrats.

Parents are concerned because they're losing their local representation at a time when the whole system is changing — Mr Snobelen talked about the great changes he had planned — and they're losing their representation before they know what those changes will be. They want to know if Mr Snobelen will broaden his idea of what a classroom is, for instance. They want to know what programs will be protected. Parents want to know if Mr Snobelen will put the \$150 million he says is going to be saved through amalgamation back into the boards that have lost so much already.

Parents are not afraid of change. They just want to see a plan first so that they can discuss it and maybe amend it and have some kind of input into it. Parents think that Bill 104 is an extreme example of putting the cart before the horse. We need to see, for instance, a per pupil funding model first and we want to know what's going to happen to our high schools. We are very worried that all of this is just being done to cut costs.

1010

I noticed when I saw the list of groups the government had chosen to come and speak to you about this bill that they were nearly all taxpayers' coalitions. Taxpayers' coalitions are not education experts. They are experts in

paying less tax.

Our education system is there to benefit everyone. We are educating the next generation of society. A strong education system is at the core of any democracy. Money spent on education is arguably the best investment that any society can make. Please don't damage our children's schools just to save money. I urge you to vote against this bill until we have all of the details of Mr Snobelen's plan for our children, our students and our adult learners, until we have all the details of Mr Snobelen's plan for our education system. Thank you.

Applause.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Kidder. Ladies and gentlemen, we cannot have this every time someone

finishes a presentation. Apart from the fact that it disturbs the proceedings, it will take time away from the presentations. I must ask you to maintain silence in the room in deference to all.

Interruption.

The Chair: This isn't the place to do it, with respect. I will have to clear the room if this continues. Ladies and gentlemen, I really want everyone to have an opportunity to present and everyone to have an opportunity to hear. We must do that in an orderly fashion. I don't want to clear the room.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Madam Chair: Just for the information of the audience, the rules of the Legislature are somewhat arcane but what they basically

say is that only members can make noise.

The Chair: Ms Kidder, we have about three minutes for questions. I guess it will be one minute for each of the caucuses. We'll start with the government caucus, a very brief question.

Mr Carroll: One quick question: You made a comment about your children and the music programs and so on that they have access to. It must be in Toronto, obviously. Do you believe that every child in the province should have access to those same programs?

Ms Kidder: Absolutely, and they don't right now. Mr Carroll: That's what we're trying to accomplish, so I don't understand why you're upset about that.

Ms Kidder: I'm sorry, sir, but to me, equality and the idea of everybody having the same chances is not bringing everybody down to the bottom level but bringing everybody up to the highest level. Right now, the average per pupil spending is much lower than it is in Toronto and one would hope that the government would be trying to find ways to bring everybody up so that everybody could have these programs.

Mr Carroll: That is exactly what our objective is.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Carroll. We won't editorialize.

Interruption.

The Chair: Excuse me. We must have order.

Mrs McLeod: If Mr Carroll's government was to achieve its objective, then the Ernst and Young concern that amalgamation could lead to increased cost, not to less cost, could well prove to be the case.

I agree with so much of what you've said. There isn't time to ask a lot of questions so let me zero in on the one that might surprise people: that somebody representing parents would have concern about parent councils. I think the greater powers to parent councils will be sold on the basis of greater involvement for parents and perhaps even more parent choice down the road. In the few seconds we have, can you tell me, besides the difficulty of getting volunteers, what your great fear is, as a parent, of that direction?

Ms Kidder: It goes back to Mr Carroll's fear, in a way. Parents are passionate about their own children. We try to be passionate about everybody's children but when you have parents running a school, what they care about is their own child. It's very important that there be some kind of equality across the province and that there be some kind of objective body that's ensuring that. If you have a lot of little fiefdoms, every single school with

their little parent council running it, you won't have

equality across the system.

Mr Wildman: I have the same problem, with such little time. The issue that you've raised about new construction is indeed a serious one and one of great uncertainty because of the role of the EIC in this bill. I'd like to hone in on the effects you said you've identified from the cuts: larger class sizes, cuts to special education, librarian cuts, music cuts, other programs and so on. The minister continually says there have not been any cuts to classroom education. How do you explain that, and do you think the \$150 million that has been identified as savings under this bill will rectify the situation and mean that we have equality in education in classrooms across the province?

Ms Kidder: Not at all, because the minister continues to say that only 1.8% of the budget has been cut, but he counts that as 1.8% of all the money that's spent on education. The government money that's spent on education, which is about \$4.4 billion, they've actually cut nearly 10% of that, so some boards have suffered enormously. The \$150 million isn't going to put the

money back there.

I don't understand how Mr Snobelen can continue to say that cuts haven't affected the classroom. I phoned a lot of parents around Ontario yesterday. I've been talking to parents around Ontario for months. They are totally disheartened, they are incredibly worried and their children are suffering badly.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Kidder, for both your thoughtful presentation and preparing it on such short notice. We really appreciate your being here.

#### ONTARIO EDUCATION ALLIANCE

The Chair: The next presenter is the Ontario Education Alliance. As the alliance comes forward, could I just ask all of you to look around and see if you find a notebook. It belongs to Raj Ahluwalia from CBC and he seems to have misplaced it. If anyone should find it, please bring it forward.

Ontario Education Alliance, please introduce your-

selves and start.

**Ms Jacqueline Latter:** Good morning. My name is Jacqueline Latter. I thank you for the opportunity to speak to this committee on Bill 104 or, as the government has so cutely titled it, the Fewer School Boards Act, 1997.

Before I begin my presentation I would also like to express my displeasure at the number of people who have been shut out of these hearings. When I came here this morning and found that there was an incomplete list and there are over 1,000 people listed to speak, and vigorous attempts were not made to get those people on to the list, I wonder exactly how much the government is willing to listen to anybody at this point. They clearly aren't making great efforts to hear us.

The Chair: In fairness, Ms Latter, the job falls to the clerk, and the clerk's office did work all weekend to try and schedule people. The difficulty has been the amount of time that people had to prepare, and people had to

decline, which is unfortunate.

**Ms Latter:** I'm not blaming the clerk in any way, but I don't know why these things, like everything else, have to be done in such a rush in the first place. There should have been much more notice given to people.

The Chair: Understood.

Ms Latter: I'm here today representing the Ontario Education Alliance, which is an independent coalition of parents, students, teachers and education workers across the province who care passionately about the future of education in Ontario. We want to stop the education cuts and we want to build a better publicly funded education system that prepares all students, regardless of gender, race, creed or economic background for challenging and meaningful citizenship.

Bill 104 is a serious threat to our children, to our schools, to our communities and, therefore, to our future as a democratic society. I am going to present to you this morning several reasons why Bill 104 must be withdrawn in its entirety. We will not be pacified by minor tinkering or amendments. We want it to be withdrawn completely.

Just before I go into that, though, I wish to spend a few moments telling you who I am. I am a founding member of the Ontario Education Alliance and a parent of two children in the Toronto Board of Education. My daughter is in grade 10 and my son is in grade 8. He has the dubious distinction of being one of the students who will be caught in the so-called double cohort year when he graduates in the year 2002, along with all the students currently in grade 7 and grade 8. This is due to yet another ill-conceived idea of this government that seems full of ill-conceived ideas, but I'm sure I'll be back in a committee room in this building at a later date to deal with that one.

1020

I was the founding chair of the Ontario Parent Council, the co-chair for a number of years of the heritage language committee at the Toronto Board of Education and I continue to sit as a community member on the Toronto Board of Education's race relations committee, parent involvement committee, and safety and security committee. I'm telling you all of this so that you understand that I come to you with a fair bit of experience in the education system as a parent. For many years I've worked in conjunction with other parents, staff at boards of education, trustees and people concerned about the education system.

As I've mentioned before, my first comments on Bill 104 have to do with the process around these hearings. The process is blatantly undemocratic. This comes from a government that stated during its election campaign that it wanted to be closer to the people. I can't think of a group of people who have pushed the people further away from the government. Although over 1,000 people have to date registered to be heard in Toronto alone, the ridiculously short time allocated for the hearings will allow no more than 100 people to voice their opinions.

I address this to the government; I know the opposition agrees with me on this. I'm addressing this to the people on those people's right. I don't want to call them "the people on the left," because they certainly aren't. Why are you afraid to hear criticism? Why are you restricting the voices of people so much? Is it because you already

know that what you are proposing is absolutely wrong but you just can't find a graceful way out of this? It reminds me of the scenario of Bill 103. I seem to have heard the same complaints in that room also about the undemocratic process of all of this.

Please don't sacrifice the future of our children in Ontario because you've made a horrible mistake on Bill 104 and you don't know how to amend it. We can give you lots of suggestions on what to do, the simplest of which, of course, is to withdraw the bill completely,

which we've already suggested.

Your government's proposal in Bill 104 to amalgamate school boards will result in a mega-board in Metro Toronto which will be responsible for over 300,000 students and 550 schools. I know the previous speaker has said this. I know you're going to hear this over and over again. I don't think it can be repeated too often. Perhaps if you hear it often enough you will understand the ramifications of this.

That is more students than in each of these provinces: New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. There would also be at least one board in northern Ontario larger than Great Britain, the country that I come from. At least John Snobelen had the good grace last week to admit when he was in Sault Ste Marie and he was questioned on this that perhaps it should be rethought and he might be able to do something about it.

Does this represent a gentler, wiser Minister of Education, less intent on creating a crisis and more committed to doing things which benefit our children, or am I being too optimistic? I leave that in your hands. You have the power to influence your government over all of this.

The proposal to drastically reduce the number of school trustees and the reduction of their salaries to what amounts to a small honorarium of \$5,000 a year means that only wealthy volunteers will offer themselves for this position, or people who are sponsored by corporations. Communities will lose their democratically elected officials. This is a travesty.

I see a puzzled look on one of the MPPs' faces. Perhaps she doesn't understand what it is this bill proposes to do. What it proposes to do is going to result in democratically elected officials having absolutely no powers and no responsibilities for that for which they were democratically elected. The gutting of the responsibilities of the school trustees will also mean that important decisions now made at the local level with input from all the players concerned, including parents, will be made only by remote figures connected to Queen's Park.

The so-called Education Improvement Commission—and I have to smile when I hear the name for that—is perhaps one of the most odious recommendations of Bill 104. In a move unprecedented in Ontario's proud education history, a body of provincially appointed people will have dictatorial powers over already democratically elected officials and officials to be elected in the future.

The so-called Education Improvement Commission will be able to make decisions which, in the words of Bill 104 — and I want you to listen to this carefully because we live in a democracy — "shall not be reviewed or

questioned by a court." I have never heard of this before in a democratic country.

School boards will be forced to comply with the commission's demands or face prosecution and fines. I ask you as a human being, are you not embarrassed that your government, which promised to be closer to the people, would even for a moment consider anything so undemocratic, and then give it a mandate for four years and give the chairs of that commission salaries close to \$90,000 a year, and employ them at this time, before the bill is given royal assent, if it is given royal assent, as consultants in the Ministry of Education? I thought you were trying to cut down on expenditure and waste; that seems to be an incredible waste of time and financial resources.

The commission is also being charged with the responsibility to make recommendations on how to promote and facilitate the outsourcing of non-instructional services. I know this has already been alluded to this morning. As a parent, I can tell you that faced with the idea that temporary help agencies will be staffing the school offices and dial-a-cleaner will be responsible for the caretaking, the mind boggles at this.

Then I realize the serious threat these proposals pose to the health and safety of our children. The health and safety factor, which parents are very concerned with, will be threatened by the fact that strangers will be in and out of the school and cleaning materials that are absolutely hazardous to the health of children will be used.

I was pleased to hear John Snobelen this morning talk about how there would be no second-class students in Ontario. We want to have a solid foundation on which to build their lives. He talked about accountability, the high quality of education and increasing the quality of the education system. That part is probably the only thing I agree with him on. The way he and your government are going about doing this is absolutely contradictory to what you're proposing and can only result in failure, and the system is being thrown into chaos because of this.

One of the most serious flaws in all of your proposals is the fact that despite the minister mentioning that over 20 reports have been done on education in the last number of years, including two royal commissions, what he fails to say is that no impact studies have been done on any of this and there is not one shred of evidence to show that any of this is going to enhance the experience of learning for the children in the classroom. That is the only reason we should be even thinking of reorganizing our education system.

I'm going to stop there because I am interested to hear the questions that are likely to be posed by all three parties. I thank you again for the opportunity to speak. 1030

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Thanks, Ms Latter, for your excellent presentation. Not only as an opposition politician, but also as a parent and certainly as a teacher for the last 30 years, my concern is always the bottom line being the child. I don't see the child's education being enhanced in Bill 104.

We talk a lot about out-of-classroom expenditures. If you can follow with me for a second, Bill 104 proposes that we keep the Ministry of Education, we keep regional education offices, we keep some school boards. That's how it was in the past as well, but now we're also adding an Education Improvement Commission and education improvement committees. Has this government not just added two levels of bureaucracy or out-of-classroom education expenditures?

Ms Latter: I agree absolutely that they've done that. But not only have they done that: I heard Ann Vanstone during the course of the questioning that she received from the commission approving her appointment last week. When asked about the unwieldy size of the Metro board in Toronto as it would become under Bill 104, how she thought this could possibly work, her answer astonished me, because what she said led me to believe that the system will just recreate itself, so instead of six school boards you will have six regional boards in the city of Toronto. If that's all that we're doing, we're just changing the name and removing the tax base and the power to the government. It's absurd, it's laughable, if it weren't so serious.

Mr Bartolucci: Absolutely.

Ms Churley: Thank you, Ms Latter. There isn't much time to go into the meat of this presentation, but I would agree with you that there are similarities between Bill 104 and Bill 103, particularly in terms of some of the undemocratic components. One thing's been bothering me. I heard Mr Snobelen quoted on the radio this morning in response to a situation where some of the parents who are here today were trying to talk to him and were separated by the police. He said, and I'm paraphrasing, that the majority of people support this bill; there are just some people who don't, who support the status quo because they have their own self-interest in preserving it. He actually said that. I would like you to tell the government members here today, and Mr Snobelen, whether or not you think that is true.

Ms Latter: Not only does Mr Snobelen not make himself available to parents, but he distorts the truth about his availability. I had an opportunity recently on a program called Face Off to ask him why he doesn't meet with groups of parents who for the last 18 months have been sending him letters, phoning him and faxing him. His response was: "I meet with people all the time. You should see my schedule." I said, "Well, that's very interesting because you never meet with any of the groups of people I'm in contact with," and he just continued to dodge that question.

As most of you know, he received a very chilly response recently at Annette Street School when he chose to meet in the school building but chose to exclude the parents from that school community from meeting with him. He has been the most unavailable Minister of Education that I recall in the time I've been involved with the education system.

Mr Young: Thank you. You expressed a concern which a former speaker did — Ms Kidder — regarding trustees. You suggested they would not be willing to run. We have over 100 hospitals, 26 community colleges and 19 universities in Ontario run by totally volunteer boards. They provide local input, local synergy, and they manage those institutions without pay altogether. Our proposal is that we would attract more of those kind of people who

want to participate, less as a career and more as a community service.

Ms Kidder also commented on the schools on welfare. We know there's a spread of funding per pupil per year from \$4,230 up to \$9,000. It's almost a \$5,000 spread in Ontario, so we will be funding education and we will be working on an allocation model to provide real equity funding across the province so there are no students who have that disadvantage.

But I wanted to ask about local representation because I think if we clearly define the trustee's role, clearly define the school council's role, we can have more input locally and more local representation. Could you explain to me why that can't work?

Ms Latter: As a parent who's been involved in the system in the way that I described at the beginning of my presentation for so many years, I know that only democratically elected people can help the community voice to be heard, and —

Mr Young: But they would still be democratically elected, and people like yourself would be the ones who would serve on the school councils, I imagine.

The Chair: Mr Young, would you let Ms Latter finish, please

Ms Latter: I don't think for one minute you believe that \$5,000 a year is going to attract anyone to run for school trustee. Would you run for the position of MPP if you were only paid \$5,000 a year? I doubt it.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Latter, for your presentation.

Applause.

The Chair: Please, ladies and gentlemen, I must have your cooperation to be able to run these hearings.

#### FRANKLAND PARENT-STAFF ASSOCIATION

The Chair: The next group has very kindly agreed to step in since we weren't able to schedule a meeting for anyone else: the Frankland Parent-Staff Association, Ms Colleen Morris.

As Ms Morris makes her way up, I'd just like to address with the committee that although the subcommittee report was for groups to be on for the next two days and then individuals for the following two days, given that we have agreed this morning to try and fill the slots that were available, it appears that the next two slots that are open could be filled by individuals and not organizations. I look for your guidance as to whether we could in fact change the subcommittee — I think the intent of the motion this morning was to try and fill it, whenever possible, with individuals.

Mrs McLeod: That was certainly the intent of the

The Chair: All right. Is that okay with you, Mr Young?

Mr Young: Yes.

The Chair: Very well.

Ms Morris, can I ask you to introduce your group and yourself.

Ms Colleen Morris: Yes. We are glad to have this opportunity to speak. I would like to introduce Maria Miller and Gay Young. We are members of the executive

of the parent staff association at Frankland Community School. There are about 450 children who attend Frankland Community School. It's in the east end of Toronto and I have to say it's the greatest joy every day of my life that my eight-year-old son and my 11-year-old daughter get up in the morning and go there.

It is a place that is full of active learning. We have seen cuts. We've managed to preserve our teacher-librarian and that was through working with the Toronto board, with the local trustees on the committee, and looking at inequities in the delivery of our libraries in Toronto. I fear that type of work that concerned parents did to make a change will be lost with the type of legislation suggested.

We are an active group that believes that parents and staff together can make for the best-quality education possible for our children. Last Thursday, more than 140 parents joined together; with our neighbourhood school we joined together to have a meeting to look at the impact of Bill 104 and related legislation.

I have to tell you that many people didn't sleep that night. I myself have spent many sleepless nights this year worrying about the incredible changes that are happening with such speed and with such little thought, and in fact little thought at how the proposed changes have not worked in places like New Zealand, the UK and Calgary. We'll look at Ottawa for outsourcing of custodial care.

An awful lot of what happens right now at our children's school works and it works because it's adequately funded, there's local input and we have a local board of education that is accountable for every penny that is spent and that is accountable to the parents and the students. I fear for my children's education and for all children of Ontario, and with that I'd like to pass over to Maria.

Ms Maria Miller: My children have also had a very good experience at Frankland school and achieved very high academic standards there. My concern is that with Bill 104 proposing that basically the control of education would pass over to the province, for all intents and purposes, how are we going to hold the government accountable?

Mr Snobelen talks about accountability. He talks about making the education system more accountable. I can tell you that this year, as parents from Frankland school, we've been trying to get in touch with the government, to have input into the decisions being made, and we've not at all been successful. We wrote two letters. We wrote one letter to Mr Snobelen and a second letter to the Who Does What panel and received no response at all in any form. We followed up those letters with phone calls and still never got answers to the questions we had about what the plans may be for education. We had a lawyer write a letter for us and again received no response, except to hear that our lawyer had been asked to withdraw from the case when the principals of his law firm received a call from the office of one of the ministers.

So when you hear parents here talking out of turn, it's because we haven't been heard yet, because we want to be heard, because we won't be heard in these hearings unless they're extended. Most of the parents won't have a voice here before you. We just managed it today

because there was an empty spot. How are they going to be heard? There's not enough time for hearings.

I'd like to know, if the province is taking control of education and is going to look to serving local needs, how are they going to serve our needs if they don't even answer our questions or answer our phone calls or answer our letters at this point? It's not going to get any better later. I'm pretty sure of it.

To give you an example of how the system has worked for us so far, several years ago in our school we had a problem with air quality control. The children and the teachers were feeling sick; particularly sensitive children were feeling very sick with headaches, concentration problems, respiratory problems. We finally identified, by having a specialist come in and look at the situation, that a lot of the problem came from moulds that were growing in the carpets of the school. There are other problems with the air-handling system and filters and things like that.

The parents at school, recognizing the problem, contacted our trustees at the board. We organized a meeting with the trustees. We had them come to the school and we discussed this problem. Within six months the problem was solved. We managed to remove the carpets from the school. We managed to improve the air-handling system enough and also changed some of the janitorial practices so that certain chemicals weren't introduced into the school's air. That was six months' time. It wasn't easy to get the board to listen, but they listened.

We've been screaming at the province all fall and nobody's listened to us so far. So I think we need to have more hearings and we want to know how the province is going to be accountable if they're planning to go ahead with such changes.

Ms Gay Young: Hi. My name is Gay Young. I'm here to speak as a parent at Frankland school and I will do my best to represent the parents at Frankland school. I think it's very ironic that the reason I'm actually sitting here speaking to you today is because one spot or three spots were not filled on the list when there are 1,000 parents who have requested a chance to speak at this hearing. I'm outraged and I'm worried about my children. I can't believe this government is excluding us from this process and proceeding so quickly that there is no opportunity for us to have any input.

We had over 100 parents at that meeting last week and I can tell you, I can convey from them that they are also outraged, as I am. They cannot believe that you are going to put in power an Education Improvement Commission that will have total authority, that cannot be questioned by the courts. The members will be paid \$80,000 to \$90,000 per year. There will be five to seven of them appointed and they, in turn, will be allowed to appoint other groups of three people that will sit across Ontario above our elected boards of education and make the decisions without consulting us because they are appointed by you, the government. I express to you my anger that this could even be conceived of.

I would also like to say that I'm very concerned about the funding for our programs. Mr Young has said that the province would like to equalize funding for every student in Ontario. I would like to say that there are different needs for different students across Ontario, and it doesn't cost the same amount for each student to be funded.

Different students have special needs.

Some students don't speak English when they come to school. In fact, 58% of the children in Ontario who come to school with English as a second language are right here in Metro. Therefore, it costs us a lot of money to help those children succeed in the school system. What will happen to those children if we receive the same amount of funding per child for those children as other children who already come to school speaking English? It will be the same thing that happened to Bev Rizzi's children in Thunder Bay, who have special needs. They used to have somebody with that child, helping that child succeed at school, and now no longer do.

I feel this government is abandoning the children of Ontario. How is that going to improve the system? I really speak from the heart, but I also have to say that I know what I'm talking about. I'm very, very insulted that Mr Snobelen would say there are parents in Ontario who don't know what Bill 104 is and that's why they're angry. It's the exact opposite. More and more parents every day are learning exactly what Bill 104 has in store for our children, and as those parents find out what's written in that bill they are becoming just as angry as I am. I'm sorry, I am becoming angry. I'll try not to shout.

It's incredible, and as Maria and Colleen have said, we have done more probably than almost any other school in Ontario to try to reach this government. We've used every possible means to try to speak to you and now we're being barred from seeing Mr Snobelen by security guards and police, for goodness' sake. We're just parents. We're not going to do anything awful. All we want to do is have a chance to speak and let you know how concerned we are for all the children in Ontario.

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Applause.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, I will not remind

you again: We cannot have applause.

I want to thank you. You've used up your time. It was marvellous of you to be able to fill in the breach. You've given us some insight. Thank you very much for appearing before us.

### METRO TORONTO CHINESE AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN LEGAL CLINIC

The Chair: The next group is the Metro Toronto

Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic.

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): Madam Chair, just as the next group is coming to the table, I'd like to put on the record that I meant no disrespect to anyone here, including the minister. I had previously scheduled constituency appointments and I had to attend to those because I felt I had a responsibility to my constituents. That's why I was a little late getting to the meeting this morning.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs Caplan.

Good morning, Avvy Go. Nice to see you. You have 15 minutes and any time that is left over will be for questioning from the three parties.

Ms Avvy Go: Thank you. My name is Avvy Go and I'm a lawyer by training. I'm here to speak on behalf of the Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal

Clinic. I just want to make an interesting observation: I've done a couple of hearings since this government came into power, but I just noticed that, apart from the minister, every single speaker who has spoken this morning was a woman and I wonder whether that says anything about who is making decisions and who is being affected by this bill.

Some of you may be wondering what a legal clinic is doing here talking about education. I thought I should begin by saying a few words about the clinic. We provide legal services to low-income immigrants and refugee families from the Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian communities in the Metro Toronto area. Many of our clients are not proficient in the English language, and as a result they face various barriers in accessing our public institutions, including the education system. We see it as our role to assist the communities we serve in removing those barriers.

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Over the years, we've tried to work with the communities and the local school boards within the Metro Toronto area to improve accessibility to education for immigrant and refugees families. Unfortunately, our struggle has met with varying degrees of success. I can cite a number of success stories we've had with the local school boards, particularly in providing legal education to ESL students on various legal issues that affect the student population and training sessions to public school teachers on issues facing immigrant students and their families.

However, we have also been involved in a number of situations where members of our communities are denied equal treatment or equal access in the school system. For instance, we have seen students of colour being mistreated by their school teachers or principals because of racism within the school, and all too often we see the lack of communication between the school administration and immigrant parents who are unable to influence school decisions that affect their children.

Students are not the only victims of a system that does not adequately address the issue of equity. We have served foreign-trained teachers and racial minority teachers who are trained in Canada but are denied employment equity within the school system.

It is therefore our position that any reform to the education system must be premised upon two principles, the principle of equality and the principle of equity, so as to ensure that disadvantaged students and educators

receive equal treatment under the system.

Therefore, in reviewing Bill 104, we believe the question that the Legislature should ask is whether the bill serves to promote the principles of equality and equity within the public school system. The answer, in our view, is no.

Although the bill opens with an acclamation that it will "improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system," in reality the result of implementing the bill will be anything but the improvement of accountability, effectiveness and quality of our education system. It is further our position that students and families within the Metro Toronto area will be the hardest hit if Bill 104 is passed into law.

Bill 104 proposes to eliminate local school boards and replace them with district public school boards. In Metro Toronto this would mean the replacement of the current six public school boards with one new Metro Toronto district public school board. At the same time, the number of trustees in Metro will be reduced from 74 full-time to 22 part-time.

Coupled with the change in governance is the fact that school boards will lose their taxing ability and hence their control over how funds can be used. In their place, the province will assume control over how spending can be done at the local level and consequently what the education program should look like within local communities.

From the perspectives of disadvantaged communities and parents and students who are traditionally denied equitable access to local school boards, the impact of school board amalgamation and increased provincial

funding control will be more devastating.

First, let's look at some figures. Of children under age 10 in Toronto, 36% live in poor families. One in four Metro families with children are headed by single parents. Of all the immigrants who enter Canada every day, over half of them settle in Ontario, and of those who come to this province about 60% eventually choose Metro as their final destination. One third of Metro public school students have lived in Canada for fewer than four years. So already under the current system immigrant parents and students have grave difficulties accessing the decision-making process. The only time that immigrant parents can exercise any influence at all within the system is when the school board establishes specific initiatives to address the issues faced by them.

I include here in my submission the example of the Chinese parents' group at the Toronto school board which allows Chinese parents to access the school administration. Such an initiative is possible in the current system because each local school board is accountable directly to the community they serve with a larger number of school board trustees who each have a smaller local constituency to work with.

The isolated cases of success will not be possible at all once the new district school board is in place. With a much bigger constituency to take care of, the district school board will be under pressure to deal with issues that are of general concern to the majority of the parents while the concerns of the minority will be pushed aside.

In addition, given the current government's public record on equity issues, there's a serious concern that any program which is aimed at promoting equity within the system will be branded as a special interest program and hence will be eliminated completely. Programs aimed at alleviating racism and sexism within the school system, programs which address the special needs of gay and lesbian students, students with various disabilities, and initiatives that support inner-city children, for example, will all face imminent attack by the province in the name of "improving quality and effectiveness."

What about the various employment equity and antidiscrimination initiatives that are still in place in several Toronto school boards in spite of the repeal of the Employment Equity Act by this government? Will the provincial government direct the new mega-board to continue with initiatives to eliminate workplace discrimination and harassment in schools? Somehow we don't believe this is going to happen.

In short, the overall impact of Bill 104 is the erosion of equity and the reduction of accountability of the public school system to disadvantaged people in this province.

Moreover, the government agenda is made clear, in our view, through the establishment of the so-called Education Improvement Commission. The provincially appointed commission will effectively seize control over the education system by restricting the budgetary and overall power of local school boards, and by establishing a commission that is armed with unchecked power and freedom from public and judicial scrutiny, the government has effectively barred all opposition to its antiequity, anti-democratic agenda.

It is clearly an attempt of the government to impose a particular version of education reform without any regard for the interests and wishes of the people who are directly affected by the system. Among these people are the poor, racial minorities, single mothers on welfare and many other disadvantaged communities who have already experienced first hand what the reform agenda of this provincial government means in other areas.

Ironically, what this provincial government is doing to take over the education system in this province reminds me of a development that is taking place elsewhere in another part of the world.

As you may know, Hong Kong will be returned to China on July 1, 1997, and to ensure what the Chinese government called a "smooth transition," they have established an interim non-elected government body to take over matters that are currently within the mandate of the elected government of the Hong Kong Legislature. Like the Education Improvement Commission, the power of this unelected transitional government is pervasive and the decisions are also free from judicial review.

Just what this Education Improvement Commission can do within the next four years to our education system is something we're loath to consider.

To conclude: The issue of improving the quality and effectiveness of our public school system is a complex, systemic issue that can only be addressed by comprehensive, systemic solutions. Bill 104 represents a very simplistic response to a challenge that reaches beyond our education system. Our community, and ultimately our children, deserve a much better and more well-thoughtout answer than what this government has offered them. Thank you.

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much, Ms Go. You've made a very impressive presentation. Because of the shortness of time, I'll just ask you one question. One of the things that has been raised by the minister in response to the types of criticisms you've put forward is that the government hopes to strengthen community councils, school councils, so that parents through their school councils would be able to influence the program for their students in their own school.

Do you think the kinds of programs you're talking about and the concerns you've raised on behalf of the minorities could be met through school councils having greater say in control over education in their schools?

Ms Go: The question is not whether it could be met, but whether there will be a strengthening of school councils and parent councils as a result of Bill 104. I don't believe that is the case. As an example, in the Toronto school boards, parent participation does not just happen overnight. It requires a lot of effort by the school boards, by the schools themselves, to ensure that all parents have a way of accessing the system. If you have a mega school board with reduced funding and the budget is controlled by the provincial government, there is no way that programs or initiatives that address parent participation will happen. So the answer is no. 1100

The Chair: For the government caucus, Mr Young. Mr Young: I just wanted to point out before we go to

one of my colleagues that successive governments, including this one, have appealed to the federal government to increase funding for English as a second language. We get in Ontario, mostly in Toronto, 50% of the new immigrants to Canada, yet we only get 30% of the money. There's a federal election coming, so if you'd please talk to them as well and help us in that, I would appreciate it.

I didn't get a chance to speak to the lady before, but I want to point out that our funding model, our allocation model, will be a stakeholder board. It will be a process. It will include basic funding. It will include funding for English as a second language, it will include special needs funding, it will include northern funding which would perhaps compensate for the extra cost for busing and heating in the north. It's a very sophisticated model. I wanted to express that to you and to the lady before, if she's still here.

Ms Go: Of course we recognize that this is not just a provincial or even a municipal issue. ESL training is a linked program in other federal programs and is partly the federal responsibility as well. But my concern is that with this bill and the structure and the funding it's proposing, a lot of the special needs programs — I'm not sure whether it's simply ESL programs, but there are many other special needs programs — will be under attack because there won't be any funding left over. The megaboard is not going to take the initiative to find money from elsewhere to continue those programs.

The Chair: For the official opposition, Mrs Caplan. Mrs Caplan: I'm not going to debate with the parliamentary assistant the rationale; that is, when you acknowledge that there are needs, why you would then cut the kinds of dollars from the existing system that they control totally, 100%. That doesn't make any sense to me.

I would like you to talk about the difficulties people who are struggling to survive have in trying to participate in their schools, both from the fact they come from other cultures and have language difficulties, but they're also just trying to survive. What will it do to those people?

Ms Go: A lot of my clients are garment factory workers or restaurant workers who work on average 12 hours a day, and they don't work just Monday to Friday; they work Monday to Sunday. Apart from the timing factor, which makes it impossible for them to participate or go to evening meetings at parent councils, they also

don't have the language skills and nobody is there to advocate on their behalf to make sure there are interpreters. There is no interpreter at this hearing, for instance.

It would be very naïve to think that somehow, if you just leave it up to the individual schools — this is what's going to happen with Bill 104 — magically, immigrant parents can overnight start participating in the process. Some of the horror stories we've heard are just incredible. We have clients, for example, whose kids somehow got signed up into French immersion without the parents' knowledge because they didn't understand the letter that came to them. It's simple things like this that the current system is not able to address, and none of these problems will be addressed at all by Bill 104.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Go. We appreciate the unique view that you brought here today.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair, a question, please, if I may put it on the record for a response either by the parliamentary secretary or by the ministry at an appropriate time. Given the parliamentary secretary's I think quite uncategorical statement about the fact that all the different areas would be funded under a funding model which seemed to be developed — I'm not sure it is at that stage of development, but his comments seemed to indicate that there was a funding model developed.

Mr Young: It's in process, is what I said.

Mrs McLeod: I would appreciate, then, some clarification from the Ministry of Education as to the total funding commitment that will be in each of the categories that have been identified.

The Chair: So noted. We'll forward that along.

Mr Wildman: I would suggest to the committee, recognizing that we have a short time frame because of the time allocation motion, that we request the ministry staff to make a presentation to this committee on the funding formula.

Mr Young: Madam Chair, what I said was that the funding formula will be prepared by a stakeholder committee which is in process.

Mrs Caplan: That's not what you said. Check Hansard. You were very clear in assuring the witness that the funding formula would contain all of these components.

Mr Young: It will contain those components, yes.

Mrs Caplan: What we're asking at this committee is that you give the people who are here and give this committee information on what those numbers are, how that formula's going to be put forward. That's part of the deliberations, to give the people — if you want to give them comfort, you have to give them the facts.

**Mr Wildman:** Chair, if the government wishes to refuse to have the members of the ministry staff come before the committee to explain the funding formula, fine. All we're doing is inviting them.

The Chair: I think both requests are for additional information. So noted, and we'll forward those along.

**Mrs McLeod:** Madam Chair, may I add that I support the request for a presentation on the funding formula, but I do request that it not take away time from presentations, that it be supplemental time to the committee.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

#### ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION

The Chair: The next presenter is the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, Ms Peterson. Thank you

very much for appearing before us.

Ms Lynn Peterson: Good morning. My name is Lynn Peterson. I'm the president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association and a trustee with the Lakehead Board of Education in Thunder Bay. Joining me today are Liz Sandals, the executive vice-president of the association and a trustee from the Wellington County Board of Education, and Grant Yeo, who is president of the Ontario Public Supervisory Officials' Association and the director of the finest board in Canada, the Durham Board of Education.

Mr Wildman: In the world.

Ms Peterson: In the world, sorry. I'd like to point out that Mr Yeo's association has made application to be

heard here and to date has not heard a word.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair — and if we could, stop the clock on the presentation — given the fact that we have time slots unfilled and there was supposedly an effort to reach all the organizations that had asked to present, I'm surprised that Mr Yeo's organization is not on as a separate presentation.

The Chair: We'll look into the matter, and it's a matter that we'll also refer to the subcommittee when we

meet at 12 today.

Mrs McLeod: Is it possible to split the two presentations today and fill one of the time slots that was empty?

The Chair: We still have one time slot open this afternoon.

Mrs Caplan: He might prefer to take that.

The Chair: Could we proceed with the speech?

Ms Peterson: Thank you. I'd also like to make one comment about the allocation funding model that is apparently in the process with all the stakeholders, being developed as we speak. The Ontario Public School Boards' Association, which represents 1.7 million children in this province, is not involved in this process. In fact, there was a meeting last Friday that we believe we were actually excluded from. We represent the majority of the students in this province. I would like to have that on the record.

Mr Wildman: Chair, I don't want to hold us up, but could we get some clarification from the ministry about that?

Ms Peterson: I would like some.

Mr Wildman: Surely if they're developing a funding formula, they would ask representatives of the public boards and the separate boards to be part of that process. If the public boards have not been asked, it calls into question how serious the ministry is about developing a workable funding formula.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Wildman. We'll take note of that. I really would like Ms Peterson to continue, finish her presentation, and we'll deal with these issues

at the end.

Mr Wildman: Perhaps our research officer could get that information for us.

The Chair: That's been noted, but for the moment I want to make sure we hear the full presentation.

Ms Peterson: On behalf of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts and recommendations with you in regard to Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act. However, given the enormous implications of this legislation, we were appalled at the time lines that have been allotted to the discussion about the future of education of the children in this province.

However, having said that, we will quickly highlight

our key points.

I'd like to begin with a quote, and it is one we've probably read recently: "Imperfect as they are, boards are an integral part of democratic government and civil society. In an education system as enormous as Ontario's, it's vital to have some form of direct community input into running our schools, beyond centralized decision-making at Queen's Park plus parent councils for all 5,000 schools."

You may recognize these words of Gerald Caplan, cochair of the Ontario Royal Commission on Learning. This commission spent three million of the taxpayers' dollars to undertake extensive research and reflection on ways to improve Ontario's education system. It came to the conclusion, on the matter of the number of school boards in Ontario, that "There is no formula, nor do there seem to be any objective criteria, that would allow us to conclude that there are too many school boards in Ontario."

Ontario's public school boards have many concerns about the legislation's proposed amalgamations, such as the geographic vastness of some of the proposed new boards, particularly in northern Ontario, and the decrease in access to decision-makers in education all across this province. One of the boards being proposed actually spans two time zones. That is not appropriate for the children of this province. But we are not here today to discuss amalgamation. Despite the legislation's uncertainty and vagueness on amalgamation, Ontario public school boards are already taking leadership and action to merge their operations.

Our primary concern with Bill 104 lies with its assault on democracy. This is not about students. In essence, it is the province's first step towards eliminating local education governments and their local taxing authority and seizing total control of education in Ontario. This paves the way for a very market-driven, American-style education system. You'll have vouchers, charter schools and privatization measures, which will fragment the public education system and allow students of different backgrounds, abilities and means to be shoved off into different school settings. As well, local communities would be rendered helpless in addressing local education needs and protecting students from provincial funding cuts.

The following has been concluded about the American experience with privatization measures: "Despite the enthusiasm of its advocates, privatization has not proved itself a solution to low student achievement or declining school budgets. Moreover, it has not improved accountability, widened parents' involvement or increased equity."

For more than 150 years, locally elected school boards in Ontario have worked with the provincial government to provide an accountable, effective and efficient public education system. As we look to the transition to the new school board structure, Bill 104 absolutely ignores democratic rights. It gives powers for education decisions to a few unelected persons who are accountable only to the provincial cabinet.

Bill 104 interferes with the 1997 day-to-day operations of existing school boards. It effectively removes boards' authority to build new schools where provincial approval has already been granted. Particularly alarming is the commission's power to make changes to any school board's 1997 budget after that budget has been democratically approved by the locally elected school board, and they consult with the community when develop their budgets.

Bill 104 also proposes that the commission's decisions are final and cannot be questioned by the courts. This is

a brazen abuse of democratic principles.

Ontario's public school boards recognize that we need appropriate help in downsizing, including advice on distributing assets, staffing issues and other operational matters. However, all these tasks can be achieved without destroying democracy and giving unprecedented powers to the Education Improvement Commission. I'll refer to it as the EIC, because I believe this is not improvement; this is implementation. It has nothing to do with the quality of education of children.

Bill 104 is a travesty of the public interest and has nothing to do with improving the quality of education for the students of this province. Instead, the savings that have been associated with the legislation's changes are

extremely questionable.

The legislation decreases accountability in education. This legislation will result in a centrally driven, very large bureaucratic system. It makes a mockery of equity in this province.

The brief we are leaving you today has two parts. Part 1 addresses sections of Bill 104 that are an assault on democracy. Part 2 provides our serious concerns with the unprecedented powers of the EIC.

Our recommendations for an orderly and cooperative process for managing change in a manner that doesn't affect the students in the classroom negatively are:

Ontario's school boards must be granted adequate time to ensure that the transition to the proposed district school boards does not negatively impact the students.

If the large, northern district school boards proceed — and they should be re-examined — a technology and communications infrastructure must be in place prior to analgamation. The infrastructure that we all believe exists across the province does not exist in the far north.

We believe that the 1997 local government elections should be delayed to November 1998, with the proposed new boards in place in January 1999, but I believe those board boundaries should be revisited.

With respect to democracy, we make the following recommendations:

The voting qualifications on the Municipal Elections Act must continue to apply to the election of school trustees.

Subsection 333(4), which adds disqualifications for running for the office of school trustee, must be deleted.

The trustee representation range must be from five to 22, not five to 12, as made in government statements. There will be communities without any representation at all.

Native trustee representation must be in addition to this range. This has not even been addressed.

We will provide our assistance to the EIC in helping to devise those formulas.

If Bill 104 becomes law — and I don't believe it should — we make these recommendations:

There must be adequate consultation on key issues.

The EIC must not have the powers it currently is proposed to have. There are already democratically approved, locally elected school boards and those have to be respected.

The EIC must establish timely and effective communications to schools boards on regulations and guidelines. Of interest is that a lot of what is proposed will be done by regulation, which means it is not subject to public scrutiny, and that is not democratic.

The local education improvement committees must include locally elected trustees and senior staff from each participating board and French-language section, and the membership of these local committees must be a local decision.

Local improvement committees must communicate back to existing school boards and their communities. I would think that is fundamentally what needs to be done if these happen.

In conclusion, this government's cavalier attitude towards democracy is absolutely frightening. It appears that this government wants to eliminate local education governments and their local taxing authority in order to seize total control of education. The province wants to use education as the scapegoat for its tax cuts. This is undemocratic and unacceptable to the parents, students and taxpavers of Ontario.

Our students deserve better, and for that reason the Ontario Public School Boards' Association will take any legal steps available and necessary to protect the democratic interests of students, parents and taxpayers within Ontario's cherished public education system.

In conclusion, I will leave you with another quote from a former Alberta Minister of Education:

"In the British tradition, we have separated our powers vertically and we've separated local government from the provincial government. I'm not suggesting for a moment that local government is autonomous from the provincial government. Historically, our forefathers intended that [local government] should have some isolation from the provincial government and some immunity from excesses of the provincial government. If we forget that or if we concede to the provincial government that it can do whatever it wants with local government whenever it wants, we have given up the very safe feature of separation of powers."

Thank you for your attention. We will answer your

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Peterson. Regrettably, we only have one minute per caucus.

Mr Carroll: Ms Peterson, thanks very much for your presentation. You made a couple of points: You said your primary concern was the assault on democracy, and you also said this bill made a mockery of equity. Our current system of funding has the amount of money spent on education per student being dependent upon the property values in the area where the student attends school. Do you believe that is fair and democratic?

Ms Peterson: Actually, that's not even accurate. We have taken some time in the last couple of years to take a look at school board spending and why and how it works out. There's no relationship between the ability to raise taxes locally and the amount spent. In point of fact, one of the most expensive situations in the province is in

an assessment-poor board.

I've heard earlier speakers saying there's a difference of from \$4,000 to \$10,000 in some boards. I've heard it assumed that the lowest cost is actually the most appropriate. I would suggest to you that it's not the most appropriate. In those communities I have looked at with the really low costs, it's because there are not the appropriate services for the kids. In far northern communities, there are no such things as access to psychologists, psychometrists, assessors. Those children need those services. There's a cost that comes with it.

Mr Carroll: Can you tell me why the school boards in those areas made the decision not to have those

programs?

The Chair: Mr Carroll, I regret — Ms Peterson: May I answer that?

The Chair: Very briefly.

Ms Peterson: We have a letter from the Minister of Education stating that those are not the responsibilities of the school board. For many, many years those programs have been cut and cut and cut. Because public school boards cannot watch the children fall through the cracks, public school boards have access — 396 million property tax dollars — to provide those services to the children of this province.

Mrs McLeod: Once again we see the frustration with the limitation on time. There is too much here to be dealt with in 60 seconds. I appreciate the fact that it's not an easy presentation for you to make because you're clearly going to be seen by the government as the key vested interest in coming forward today.

interest in coming forward today.

Ms Peterson: I have a vested interest.

Mrs McLeod: I know. I'm just going to spiel for a minute because I confess to my bias of having been a school trustee for a long time. It was suggested that it may be difficult to get people to run for these new boards, and I think the parliamentary secretary expressed his surprise because it's no problem getting volunteers for hospital boards and university boards and college boards. I want to point out the primary difference here, and I guess I'll just be asking whether it reflects your views and the views of trustee associations.

Five thousand dollars wouldn't deter me from running as a school trustee. It's more than I actually got when I was a school trustee. Driving 200 miles to my regular meeting probably would deter me, because I'm a northern Ontario trustee. By the way, John Snobelen is only

talking about low density for increased trustee representatives, not making those boards smaller. But what would have really deterred me from running would be the sense of absolute helplessness if I became simply the scapegoat for the ministry's funding cuts and the one who is trying to explain the impossibility of those cuts to my local community. Is that why you think it might be difficult to get people to run?

Ms Peterson: That would be one of many reasons. If you have centralized decision-making and decentralized blame, what you have is not an opportunity to respond to the children of your community. I cannot stand in front of my community and say, "I will do this for the children." I do have a vested interest: I have seven grand-children; four of them are in the system. I do not want anybody to take risks with their future. The people I elect — I should have the opportunity to believe they have the right to influence the programs those kids get. The kids of this province deserve better.

Mr Wildman: I'd like to find out, since I asked the minister last week about the construction of schools and he said there was no problem, why you think it's a problem. Second, could you explain why you think the minister's in such a rush that he would use the kind of measures he has implemented in Bill 104 to get this through by the beginning of next year, rather than taking the time it might require to do it deliberately and properly?

Ms Peterson: In terms of the capital issue, the letter that was sent to us said you could debenture as long as you could pay it off this year and then take the rest of the money out of your operating costs for the years in the future. We've got a real problem in that. If we were building a school, which we are not, I suspect that if I went to the local lending authority and asked them for several million dollars, they would like to know who they are lending it to, because my board will not exist after January of this year. There's some reluctance there.

There's also no clear understanding of how these debentures are going to be paid for and by whom and who will raise the dollars. There are too many questions around capital and it has made people very reluctant to

make those kinds of commitments.

**Mr Wildman:** In other words, you'd have to take it out of the operating funds from next year.

Ms Peterson: Apparently.

Mr Wildman: So that's a further cut to operating. Ms Peterson: That's what would happen, yes.

The Chair: Thank you all for coming. Just as a point of clarification on the point raised about Mr Yeo's organization not being able to appear, we apparently contacted them late Friday afternoon. They are to appear tomorrow at 9:45. We're waiting for confirmation, if that's of any help to you. This is what the clerk tells me.

Mr Grant Yeo: Perhaps I can confirm it now.

The Chair: All right. We'll see the Ontario Public Supervisory Officials' Association at 9:45 tomorrow morning.

Thank you very much for coming.

#### ELLEN KERT

The Chair: Our next presenter is Ellen Kert. Thank you very much for being here this morning and for being

available to present to us on extremely short notice, much shorter than most other individuals who've come before us. You have 15 minutes, as you know because you've been here since 9.

Ms Ellen Kert: I have 15 minutes, and I'm going to speak to what I've heard this morning because I did not expect to speak today and I have a couple of points. I am a parent. I have a son who is in grade 6 in a Toronto school. I have been very involved in my son's school from the moment he entered junior kindergarten. I have volunteered in the classroom, I have been on staffing committees, I have been involved in PSA, so I consider myself somewhat knowledgeable about the public education system.

I'd like to say that the applause you heard earlier today, that you had a hard time containing, is an indication —

The Chair: Was that you?

Ms Kert: Well, it wasn't me, but it's an indication of how many parents care. This government continually says it's just special interest groups. I, as a parent, am appalled at this. I think it's important and incumbent on you all to recognize the real meaning of that applause.

A couple of points: Mr Snobelen this morning talked about quality of education. I don't see anything in this bill that has anything to do with quality of education. He talked about classroom expenses versus non-classroom expenses and that there's all this room for cutting down, paring down and saving money. This is not the case. According to the newspaper, according to John Snobelen, classroom expenses do not include gym teachers, the library, music teachers, special ed. This is nonsense.

At my son's school we still have sports teams because there are parents coaching. We have a vice-principal who is a half-time gym teacher and a kindergarten teacher who is a half-time gym teacher. We have lost our music program. We have gone from 17 classroom teachers to 14½ classroom teachers and from five full-time specialists to two and a half specialists over the last three years, and this is in Toronto, one of the richest boards. So the notion that the classroom is not being affected is bogus.

The next point is, there's been a lot of talk about accountability. I, for one, don't know of any kind of accountability where you don't have control over the money, so I don't know what these new amalgamated boards are going to do. I also don't see any change in terms of the layering of bureaucracies between the amalgamated boards and the expanded provincial control and these wonderful anti-democratic appointees with all of their powers and, supposedly, parent councils. I see just as many layers, if not more so, than we have today.

The other point that's been raised repeatedly is that this per pupil cost should be equalized. I agree with the first parent speaker this morning that all of our children deserve the same quality of education. I take exception to the fact that this is one pupil expense. The cost of educating pupils varies across the province. There are different elements that come into effect. These have to be taken into account.

Busing is not a big concern in Metro Toronto. English as a second language is not a big concern in the north. Native issues are not as much of a concern here as they

are in the areas where there are reserves. We need to take these things into account and I've heard nothing today that tells me that has been taken into account in any real way.

Finally, about the parent councils, I am terrified at the notion that parent councils are being thrown out as the be-all of local effectiveness. I have been involved as a parent, as I've said, at many levels in the school, with the board, and I've noticed, number one, that certain schools have more parents involved than others. There's always trouble getting enough people involved in these councils and, as Annie Kidder pointed out, some parents only care about their own kid. Some of the most vociferous and strongest voices in the school, which will I'm sure take over these parent councils in no time flat, are the one-interest parents.

I'm concerned about racists taking over the school, who don't care. I'm concerned about parents who don't look at the interests of all the students, and I'm worried about the parents who are out banning books, and the Christian authorities. There are certain groups, very well organized, that will have a field day with these parent councils. The inner-city schools where you have a large majority of unemployed parents, uneducated parents, will get nothing. They are already missing a lot because they don't have the fund-raising capabilities and the expertise of the parents, and those students will suffer considerably.

As far as the trustees and \$5,000, well, it means that only people with means can even consider such a job. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Kert. We have approximately two minutes per caucus and we'll start with Mrs McLeod.

1130

Mrs McLeod: Let me echo the appreciation of the Chair for your being here out of your concern, obviously, even though you weren't on the scheduled list, and being able to pick up the presentation as quickly as you did.

For me, you hit, among a number of things, on one that hasn't come forward quite yet in our committee hearings and that's really key, and that's what you've seen in terms of cuts in educational spending even in Toronto which, as you've pointed out, would rank as one of the high-spending boards. That may come as a surprise to people because there may well be people, including members of the government, who think that one of the ways in which we're going to achieve equitable funding through this is by taking some of those rich assets of Toronto and spreading them to lower assessment boards.

I think it's absolutely critical that the point you're making be understood, that there are problems with cuts in the Toronto schools. I go back to a statement that is ignored in the Ernst and Young report which talked about all of the out-of-classroom expenditures. The point was made that the Ministry of Education needs to go back to the drawing board and get a better understanding of factors beyond a school board's control that drive costs up, like special needs students and, I would think in Toronto, English as a second language. Just any comments you have further on that, because I think it's such a key point.

Ms Kert: It's absolutely true. One of the biggest problems with the cutbacks is that the classrooms have also expanded in size. There's a student who joined my son's school — I'm involved in a PALS program where parent volunteers are matched with kids having trouble reading. I'm working with a child who's been in Canada for six months, who's in a grade 5 classroom, who I believe is brilliant from what he can do in math and what he is able to pick up, who simply does not have the language comprehension. With 32 kids in the class, he just sits in that class and that's it. The special ed hasn't kicked in for this child yet, and this is going on all over the place.

The quality of the education for everybody is dropping, and unless you have a parent — with my son, I invest hours and hours a week with his school work at home. But the kids I work with at the school don't have parents who do that. Their parents can't do that, for a whole variety of reasons. So yes, it's already affected. All you're going to do is bankrupt one system to make

everybody bankrupt.

I understand kids in the north don't have math textbooks. I've heard of schools where kids aren't allowed to take home math textbooks because they might lose them, so they don't do math. Then I read in the newspaper we're worried about technology, testing, standards and so on. If a kid can't take home a book, how are they going to learn and what kind of quality of education is that?

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much for coming in in the breach. Repeatedly in answer to questions in the Legislature and publicly, the minister has said classroom education has not been adversely affected, that the government has maintained its commitment that was a guarantee for classroom expenditures. On some occasions the minister has said if things like special ed have been adversely affected — libraries, other things like that — well, libraries don't count because they're not classroom.

Ms Kert: They don't count. That's right, libraries

aren't important.

Mr Wildman: But if class sizes have increased, then —

**Ms Kert:** Class sizes have increased, yes. Our grade 1-2 classrooms have gone from 21 to 28 in the last three years.

Mr Wildman: That's the fault of the board, the minister says.

Ms Kert: It's not the fault of the board.

Mr Wildman: How do you react to this? Why is it we keep getting this message from the minister that class sizes haven't gone up, special ed hasn't been affected, ESL hasn't been affected and we continually have parents like you come before us who say they have?

Ms Kert: I don't know where Mr Snobelen is getting his facts from. I don't understand the man. I open the newspaper — you do not have to be a rocket scientist. The parents and the clapping and the jeering that you heard is precisely because every day we have to listen to Mr Snobelen make these complaints.

Talk about classroom not including a library — before, the Frankland parents talked about keeping the library open. There's a situation in our school where the library was closed during school hours because there was no one

to staff it. Do you want to explain to me that that's not part of education? How are our grade 5 kids supposed to do their research when they can't even go in the library to get a book? This is the kind of nonsense that's going on all over the province, and so the parents are furious. This bill has nothing to do with anything. All this is is a power grab, a way to control the money, look for cuts in money that doesn't exist, that is already not there.

Mr Wildman: How do you, as a parent from Toronto

then, react to the -

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr Wildman. We're running out of time. Ms Johns?

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): First of all, I'd like to say that I'm the representative for Huron County — which is up north, I guess, from the perspective of Toronto — but also I'm the mother of two children who go to school in this system. They're five and seven years old.

I've been a very big advocate in this government for equity finance reform across the board. I believe that there should be a per pupil rate for the normal child who goes to school, and then we have to make additional dollar allotments for things that are outside of the realm, for example, English as a second language; in rural Ontario, the gross amount of busing we have to do to be able to get the kids to school.

What happens right now is that in my riding, we don't have books, you're right, and we spend between \$4,500 and \$5,500 per student. What we have in Ontario right now, I believe, and why I feel so strongly about this, is a two-tiered system where kids in some areas have a lot more money spent on them for education than other children across the province do. I don't think that's fair.

I think what has to happen is we have to find a level that educates children, that allows all children to get the same comparable education in the province and allows us to say that there are special needs that we have to put dollars to. Admittedly, English as a second language, I hear, is a big issue here, but we also have special needs in outlying areas. We cannot have the discrepancy of \$4,000 between my area and Toronto areas.

You're talking about cuts that are happening in Toronto when you are a negatively-funded board. You don't get money from the province of Ontario right now. You collect yours all by property tax, so any cuts you've had have been as a result of boards making decisions.

I think we have to look at this as a province and say, "What's fair for every student in the province of Ontario?"

Ms Kert: What's fair for every student in the province of Ontario is to get a decent education with a decent-sized classroom, with teachers who are knowledgeable—not computers, not machines, but actually live people to teach them—and to have some access to specialist support.

Mrs Johns: That's right, on a per pupil basis.

Ms Kert: The presumption or the underlying principle that I'm hearing from — I guess this is the Conservative Party, but this side of the room — is this notion that somehow there's all of this excess in Toronto and that there's some middle level that will be fair for everybody, and I'm saying that's not true. What I am saying is that —

Mrs Johns: And we're not saying it's true either.

Ms Kert: — that's not true, and looking at just the dollar amounts does not deal with the educational issues.

The Chair: Thank you. That concludes the time that's available to the government caucus. I want to thank you, Ms Kert, for coming before us and presenting again, as I say, under extreme circumstances. Thank you for your thoughts.

**Mrs Caplan:** While we're waiting for the next presenter, I wonder if I could put a question on the record.

The Chair: Yes. Could I ask, first of all, the Metro Parent Network to come forward. Kathleen Wynne? Mrs Caplan.

Mrs Caplan: My question really, if she wishes to answer it on the record, is, given what Mrs Johns has just said about the state of education in her riding, how she goes home and justifies the cuts to education that her government has made, and also —

**Mrs Johns:** You have been making cuts to my education for years, the Liberals and the NDPs.

Mrs Caplan: How do you justify it?

#### METRO PARENT NETWORK

The Chair: Ms Caplan, I think your comment is out of order and I think we'll proceed with the next presenter.

Interruption.

**The Chair:** Excuse me. This is Ms Wynne's time, and I think she'd like to use it.

Ms Kathleen Wynne: I am a mediator. Would anybody like —

The Chair: Actually, we may need you.

Ms Wynne: I just don't have much time to mediate these days.

The Chair: Could you introduce your co-presenter? You have 15 minutes.

Ms Wynne: My name is Kathleen Wynne and I'm here today on behalf of the Metro Parent Network. Laura Dark is also a member of the Metro Parent Network from East York, and there would have been others of our group here except that it's very difficult for parents to be available at this time of day.

I just want to respond quickly to the last comment. I think we all know that we need about \$8,000 per pupil in this province. Four thousand dollars is about exactly half of what a student in Ontario needs, so I couldn't agree more with Mrs Johns that we need to bring everybody up to about \$8,000.

Having said that, I'm going to make some comments

Mr Wildman: How do you do that when you take a billion dollars out?

Interruption.

Ms Wynne: All right. It's my turn.

The Chair: Yes. Excuse me, please. Ms Wynne, please continue.

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**Ms Wynne:** I'm a Toronto parent. I'm a mother of three children: a 17-year-old, a 15-year-old and a 13-year-old in grades 11, 10 and 7. I've been a parent volunteer for about 13 years. I've served on various

committees of the Toronto board. I've done field trips. I now serve on the steering committee of the Citizens for Local Democracy. I'm a member of the Ontario Education Alliance. One of the things about this current political climate is that there are lots of groups to belong to if you want to work to improve your community, so that's an opportunity that I'm really pleased has come along.

I speak to you today as a member of a group of concerned parents from across Metropolitan Toronto. Our group formed in December 1996 to begin to coordinate a response among parents in York, East York, Toronto, North York, Scarborough and Etobicoke. Our group is made up of informed parents who are able to tap into local parent opinion. We share concerns about the direction in which this government is moving education and we're working together and with other parent and teacher groups to preserve the excellent publicly funded education system that already exists in Toronto. I would agree with the previous speaker that there are problems, there are things to improve, but for the most part we have a pretty good system of education, I'd say, in Metro, and we want to preserve that.

Bill 104 is predicated on an assumption that the education system in Ontario is broken, that we are in crisis and that we must first restructure, then cut money from the system to repair it. We challenge that fundamental assumption. That is not to say we do not believe the system could be improved. Many of us, and Laura and I could speak to this in great detail, have spent many years of our lives as parent volunteers attempting to improve what already exists. Our approach, however, has been to work with our educators and elected representatives in order to come up with the very best solutions to complex problems. Education, like democracy, is a messy business. We challenge the myth that has been perpetuated by this government that education in Ontario does not work, that it is too expensive and that it does not produce welleducated, well-rounded students by the end of their OAC year. We believe it does all of those things.

The Fewer School Boards Act is a dangerous piece of legislation because it threatens local democracy. By making local elected representatives less accessible to citizens and less responsible for real decisions in education, it removes the opportunity for meaningful participation by the electorate in education. Creating the Education Improvement Commission makes a mockery of any vestige of democratic process. The Education Improvement Commission's sweeping powers are proof that this government is interested only in controlling the system completely so that it can pave the way for major cuts in the near future. The fact that this legislation has been introduced without any information about what funding levels will be guaranteed for our students and, more importantly, what programs will be considered sacrosanct convinced parents in our group and around the province that the agenda of this government is to grab money that has supported education, fund its tax cut and leave schools to fend for themselves in a corporate wasteland.

In Bill 104, sections 335(3)(g) and (h), the EIC is given the mandate of making recommendations to the minister on the feasibility of strengthening the role of

school councils and of increasing parent involvement in education. These do not sound like danger. In fact, they sound like sops to parents who want a voice in their children's education. But those of us who are close to schools know that administrative authority to micromanage schools is not what parents are looking for. This legislation opens the gate for charter schools, and that's not what we want. I have visited parents in Aurora, Durham and Thornhill who agree with Metro parents that managing a school that does not have adequate resources to provide necessary programming for its students sounds like full-time volunteer fund-raising and hours of meetings that would be better held by paid, elected representatives

This government has said repeatedly that it does not intend to deplete the resources of the classroom. If Bill 104 passes, the stage is set for the removal of millions of dollars from education in Ontario. It will be impossible to remove that kind of money from our system without harming the classroom. Since 1975, levels of funding grants from the province for education in Ontario have fallen from about 60% to about 30% and local jurisdictions have had to make up the difference. Ontario's per pupil funding grant already ranks 46th-lowest of 63 jurisdictions in North America and Ontario's funding grants are lower than those of any of our surrounding geographic jurisdictions with similar demographics and geography. Metro funds its education entirely from its own tax revenues. At present there are boards outside of Metro that cannot provide JK for its students, that have to share caretakers between two or three schools and that have long since lost music and physical education teachers.

None of this is good for students in those boards, nor will it be good for Metro students, yet as parents we hear the government suggesting that efficiency is the bottom line of these changes. Our problem is that we do not hear anyone demonstrating that they understand the research that shows how important JK can be to a child, especially a child at risk. We do not hear anyone who understands that music enhances cognitive development. We do not hear anyone who seems to understand that the richness and complexity of the relationship between a teacher and a student is central to a healthy classroom and that this relationship is at risk if the teacher has to manage more than 20 to 25 students.

We are worried. Our Metro Parent Network group has gone to the Metro Toronto Board of Education and asked for their support in resisting Bill 104. They unanimously passed a motion that calls on the government to withdraw this legislation. We are in the process of gathering support for that motion from our local schools and support is not hard to come by. Parents in all our municipalities are distrustful of this legislation and afraid for their children.

It is important for this committee, especially those on my left, to know that parents understand the substance of Bill 104 and that they do not support it. There are meetings in schools and community centres all over Metro where parents and community members are coming together in their resistance to the mega-plans of this government. We understand that both the restructur-

ing of the municipalities and the restructuring of education are part of the same assault on democracy.

Parent groups are not inherently negative or reactive. They form in order to be part of the lives of their children and so inherently are a creative force in a community. They tend to be energetic and positive. They look for support from institutions around them because child rearing in contemporary times can be a bewildering and isolating experience. Of course if the institutions, the government or the education system abuses them, then they must find ways to react and fight back, and that is what is happening now.

We believe that our children and our communities would be better served by a government that would consult with us and with the people who teach our children to find solutions to the very real problems that exist in our system. For example, how can we provide good early childhood education for every child in the province? How can we make sure that children do not go to school hungry, because we know the social costs if we do not? How can we make sure that private corporate interests do not start shaping the curriculum in our schools? How can we ensure that class sizes in all schools in the province are reasonable? How can we guarantee that all children have the special education. ESL and enrichment programs they need? How can we ensure that school buildings are maintained and safe by people who know the students and care about the school? How can we guarantee that the school is a genuine part of the community and is used by seniors, adult learners and youth groups throughout the week? How can we guarantee that equity programs are in place in all our schools to help our children create a more humane world than we have created? How can we make sure that day care programs are integrated into the lives of our schools?

These are the questions we should be grappling with. These are the questions to which every parent in this province wants answers. Obviously they will engender a lively debate, but if we choose to ignore them and focus on short-term financial issues, we will face greater costs in the future. We will face the costs of building more jails and higher social costs. If we do not address these issues, we will not instil in our children the flexibility of mind and the ability to work in teams that we are told by business they will need. Most significantly, we will miss the opportunity to build on the exemplary work we have already done. Our education system is one of the best in the world. Mr Harris knows this and has claimed it to be so. We need to build on it.

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A final note about the process here: The committee hearings on Bill 104 are extremely short, especially considering the number of people who wish to address you. It is difficult for those of us outside the process to believe that it has integrity when over a thousand people are being told they cannot speak. We ask you to ask the subcommittee to recommend that hearings be extended. This legislation is of major importance to us all and should be handled with respect.

Applause.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Wynne. Excuse me, for those of you who are new to this room, please refrain from clapping.

**Mr Wildman:** There's so much in your presentation. You posed the main questions for all of us as members, as citizens and as parents. This bill doesn't answer any of those questions.

Ms Wynne: Exactly.

Mr Wildman: I want to deal with your last comment about the process. I agree with you that this is far too short and it's denying people the right to speak, but I think you have a bit of a misunderstanding about the way things work. We have before us these hearings in Toronto, and then six hearings outside of Toronto, put forward in a time allocation motion brought in by the government. This committee can't do anything about that.

Ms Wynne: My understanding was that the subcommittee had some control over that. I was informed of that

earlier in the process. Is that true?

Mr Wildman: No. The subcommittee has absolutely no control over this.

Ms Wynne: So the subcommittee can't recommend — Mr Wildman: The subcommittee can recommend who can be invited in the hours we are given.

Ms Wynne: So there's nobody who can extend the hearings at this point?

Mr Wildman: Not unless the government — the government could amend the motion.

Ms Wynne: That's exactly what I would like to have happen.

Mr Wildman: The subcommittee cannot do it. In the debate it became obvious that although there had not been a delay of the bill by the opposition, the government was going to bring in a time allocation motion. Initially they were talking about 10 hours in Toronto only and four hearings outside of Toronto.

Ms Wynne: Then I redirect my request from the subcommittee to the government to extend the hearings.

**Mr Carroll:** I have a question, Ms Wynne. You brought up the study that showed that Ontario is 46th out of 63 jurisdictions in per pupil funding. I presume that's the OSSTF publication you're referring to.

Ms Wynne: Actually, it was prepared for the Ontario

Education Alliance.

Mr Carroll: In

Mr Carroll: In that, which used all American numbers, coincidentally, Alberta is \$950 per student less than Ontario and yet they scored dramatically higher in all recent testing than we did in Ontario. Does it concern you that they spend almost US\$1,000 per student less but score much better on international testing than we do?

Ms Wynne: No, it doesn't concern me because I believe the impact of the education cuts that have been made in Alberta hasn't been felt yet. I believe that in the testing that's done, in the standardized tests that are used in Ontario, we include a much broader base of kids. In a lot of cases we're comparing apples and oranges, and standardized testing is a whole other issue that we'll have to talk about at a later date.

Mr Carroll: So you don't accept the results of the standardized testing.

Ms Wynne: I think they have to be questioned, yes. Mrs McLeod: Just a quick comment: One of the

Mrs McLeod: Just a quick comment: One of the things Mr Carroll might want to do is look at the ratio of students who have English as a second language in Alberta as opposed to Ontario, which is one of the

analytical factors that helps to explain the results you're seeing.

Ms Wynne: Yes. That's the piece about the inclusion of all students.

Mrs McLeod: I have just a quick comment, and then I think Mrs Caplan wants to make a motion relative to your recommendation.

The questions you've raised are just such critical questions. If I feel saddest about one thing, it's the fact that the struggle of public education has been to provide equality of education universally and not subscribe to mediocrity. I think there's not a person here who would not agree that the province, in order to have that equitable base, should be paying a greater contribution of education costs. I think what we've got here is a giving up of the struggle and a resignation to mediocrity for everybody, and I just think that's truly sad.

Mrs Caplan: If it's appropriate, and I have the floor at this time, I'd like to use the remainder of our time to place the motion that the committee actually recommend to the minister and to the government that additional time for hearings be allocated to accommodate those who have made a request who have been unable to be accommodated. I think if this committee does that, then (1) we will respond to what you said; and (2) it will give the government an opportunity to understand just how important it is to hear from people. I place that motion.

The Chair: Your motion is to extend time for hear-

ings?

Mrs Caplan: No, that we ask the government to change its time allocation motion.

The Chair: All right. Fair enough. We will deal with that, but I want to thank you both very much for appearing on behalf of your organization.

Is there a seconder for Ms Caplan's motion?

Mr Wildman: I'll second it.

The Chair: Debate?

Mrs Caplan: Why do we have to debate it?

The Chair: I think Mr Young wants to say something. Mr Young: I would like to defer this motion or this discussion to subcommittee.

Mrs Caplan: I don't mind if you defer it to the subcommittee, but I don't think we want to debate it as a deferred —

Mrs Johns: We have people waiting here. They have been waiting for an hour.

The Chair: Mr Wildman, is there anything you want to add?

**Mr Wildman:** Well, if we extend the hearings, then they'll have lots of time to make their presentations. Let's not be silly about this.

The Chair: The motion has been made and seconded. We'll defer it to subcommittee for discussion, but ultimately it is up to the government to decide what they do with the time allocation motion.

#### TORONTO BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: The next presenter is from the Toronto Board of Education. Mr Moll, thank you very much for coming on such short notice. We appreciate how much people have had to prepare to be here. You have 15

minutes, and in any time that's left over, the three government caucuses will ask you some questions.

Mr David Moll: Thank you. I believe you have a copy of the presentation I'm making, members of the committee. Maybe we'll read through this together.

The public education system of Ontario is based on the principle that it is a fundamental right for all children to have a high quality of education. Our schools, unlike the separate system, are open to all students. This gives the public school system a standing in a democratic society that must be safeguarded. We believe that Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, will irreversibly erode the viability of the public school system in Ontario.

The program is the heart of the Toronto Board of Education. Bill 104 asks students and parents to accept a new system without telling them specifically which programs in schools will be funded by the provincial government. The Minister of Education has stated repeatedly that he will ensure that more money goes into the classroom. We need to know how. We've seen his numbers and, frankly, they don't add up.

The last time Queen's Park shifted money from the public system to the separate system it cost more than four times what the province originally estimated. We believe that any reform which takes money from public schools in Metro Toronto and transfers it to the separate school system is fundamentally wrong.

While we have been given very little information about what is included in the minister's new vision, we have had a fair indication about what will not be included. If provincial capital grants do not cover funding for junior kindergarten classrooms, then we must conclude that junior kindergarten is not to be part of the new system. If the minister's cost study was intended to define outside classroom costs, then we can conclude that school librarians, music, physical education teachers, principals, school secretaries, and caretakers are not part of the new system.

Bill 104 provides for the privatization of many school board functions from caretaking and day care to payroll and lunchtime activity programs, virtually everything that is not teaching. Parents who can afford to enhance their child's education with sports programs, after-4 French classes and music lessons will be able to do so and those who cannot will have to do without. This cannot be the future of public education. This truly would be a two-tiered system where only a few get access to the extras, and that is unacceptable.

We believe our city has avoided the problems of large American cities for one main reason: strong neighbourhoods with strong neighbourhood schools. Our residents have not abandoned the city core and fled to the suburbs. Our support for inner-city schools has always been strong to ensure that these schools are as successful and productive as those in the more affluent areas of the city.

It has been proven over and over again that spending money to correct problems when a child is young costs substantially less than spending money on an adult. Education is not about plunking children into desks for five hours a day and sending them out somewhere, maybe home, maybe not, in the hope that they will become good

and capable citizens. The test of any progressive reform should be to strengthen the quality and accountability of public education. Bill 104 fails this test.

We ask for your commitment that no matter what else you do, you guarantee a basic minimum standard for our system, a bill of rights, if you will, for Toronto's public schools. These rights must include the following:

Recognition that every child is unique and that the school system must have programs to meet a student's individual needs so that all students may have the opportunity to learn:

A curriculum with clear standards that is meaningful, inclusive and pedagogically sensible;

Realistic measures of student achievement that reflect the diversity of our students and that can be used to improve our programs;

A program that includes access to junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten;

Class sizes of no more than 20 students in the primary division and 25 students in the junior and senior divisions;

Libraries in schools with teacher librarians:

Physical education programs with suitable indoor and outdoor recreational space;

Strong visual and performing arts programs — music, art, drama, dance;

Strong language programs which include English as a second language, French, international and native languages;

Strong math, science and technology programs with adequate computer resources;

A full range of special education programs that meet the needs of our exceptional learners;

Psychological and social services to support student learning;

A secondary school program that prepares students for whatever future those students choose;

Adult education including literacy, numeracy, English as a second language and citizenship courses and instruction to adults who want to complete their high school education and gain employment skills;

Child care in schools to ensure quality care and help young children with the transition from home to school;

Safe and healthy schools that are clean and well maintained;

A dedicated professional staff, both teachers and their support staff, to ensure the highest learning and safety standards for our students;

Parent involvement that is meaningful with sufficient support to make participation in the school system effective.

Finally, you must provide a funding model that guarantees that the above standards can be met.

Equity does not come from equal funding. You know that a loaf of bread does not cost the same across Ontario. Renting an apartment in downtown Toronto doesn't cost the same amount some of you would pay in your own ridings, so why are you taking the position that education should cost the same in every school board?

We are asking that the funding model be used to secure our programs and not to extract money from the public school system. School boards raise taxes for education and they are directly accountable to the electorate for the spending of those taxes. School boards are the only level of government with a single purpose, educating children, and we do just that. We educate more students, from more backgrounds and more countries, in more subjects, who receive more diplomas than any other school system in North America.

Like all school boards in Ontario we respond to the particular needs of the communities we serve, and our programs are tailored to meet those needs. This is and has been the comerstone of the Ontario public school system: locally elected school boards providing for the education of children in each community.

Bill 104 will amalgamate all Metro's public school boards. The separate school board will be left as is. The new Metro Toronto district public school board will be responsible for the education of over 300,000 students, making it the largest school board in Canada. It will have more students than the total student population of six other Canadian provinces, but it won't be a school board, certainly not as we know it. In fact, if Bill 104 becomes law, we will no longer have the ability to fulfil the duties for which we were elected.

The Education Improvement Commission will take over school board functions. This unelected, unaccountable, all-powerful body will be able to dictate which programs we can run, whom we can hire and what services we can fund. What happens after the transition? With no authority to raise taxes or make program and staffing decisions, the mega-board will be no more than a giant complaints desk to serve as a buffer between the provincial government which controls the money and the parents who demand accountability for their tax dollar.

Where's the democracy in this? It's not in the governance, it's not in the funding, it's not in the taxation, it's not in accountability and it's certainly not in the Education Improvement Commission, whose decisions will be final, undemocratic and cannot be challenged in a court.

What is at stake here is not whether we have four school boards or 40 or 400. We are and have been more than willing to do things differently if the ultimate impact is improved education for our students. We know that a strong public school system is essential in creating and preserving a democratic, productive and humanitarian society.

The provincial government has provided only four days of public hearings for Bill 104, which means that many Toronto citizens will not be heard. The Toronto Board of Education will hold its own hearings so that all our communities can speak and their messages will be sent to Queen's Park.

We're not here to tell you the system is perfect. It isn't, but it's not broken. Bill 104 just might break it beyond repair. We charge you to give parents and students of Toronto a straightforward answer about the future of their schools before the Toronto Board of Education is dismantled. Thank you.

Mr Young: Thank you, Mr Moll. Mr Wildman has gone on the record twice here this morning saying something that I think he should know better than to say.

The education minister has said that cuts to education should not have affected the classroom. I'd like to give you an example. I believe the lady is still here —

Mr Wildman: Oh, "should" not. In your document you guaranteed it.

**Mr Young:** This is my time. I believe the lady, Mrs Frenette, is still here. I would like to have the time checked and have that added to my time, please.

I'd like to refer to Deborah Frenette's presentation. She talked about having trouble getting a librarian in their school. I wonder if you could explain to her, perhaps outside this committee meeting, after, that the Toronto board hasn't had any cuts from this government, none whatsoever. Anything that's happened in your schools is solely the responsibility of the Toronto board. It's very important to know this, so I think it's important to look at why it has affected the classroom.

Mr Moll: I thought you'd come to a question.

Mr Young: Mr Moll, this is my time. There is a board in Toronto, I believe it's the Metro board, where 35 people who rarely if ever go into a classroom make over \$100,000 a year. Trustees make \$50,000 a year. They have executive assistants, they have the use of a car and driver, and it goes on and on. I'd like ask you, what has this got to do with educating our children?

Interruption.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, be quiet, please.

Mr Moll: Mr Young, first of all let me disabuse you of —

Interruption.

**The Chair:** Madam, I ask you to be quiet, please. *Interruption*.

The Chair: Madam, Mr Moll is speaking. Please be quiet.

Mr Moll: Mr Young, let me disabuse you of the notion that we have cars and drivers.

Mr Young: I said the use of a car and driver.

**Mr Moll:** No, you'd be wrong in that as well. We do not have and haven't had the use of a car driver since 1971, I believe. That's quite a few years ago.

Yes, trustees are paid. They account for, in Metro Toronto — if you eliminate them, that's about one quarter of 1%. That is also the democratic governance of education. I don't think people who run for public office do it for the money. I don't think any of you ran for these positions because you figured this would be a cushy way to pick up some extra spending money. I don't think that is it. Many of you would have been prevented, I would suggest, from running for office if you weren't paid anything at all or paid something that frankly is laughable, but that isn't what I'm here to talk about. And \$5,000 to run across a federal riding is laughable, absolutely laughable.

Mrs McLeod: I think the parliamentary secretary has learned from the minister how to use totally unsubstantiated statements in order to create a perception that there's a problem that needs to be fixed. It's a skill that's been transmitted fairly effectively.

I agree with so much of what's in your brief that I think I'm going to ask you a question about something that's not in the brief; I hope that's not unfair. One of the

concerns that a lot of people have been expressing, a potential consequence of the essential disappearance of boards, or at least their ineffectiveness, is more and more pressure of privatization. You've noted the outsourcing of non-instructional kinds of programs and services, but another possible consequence is privatization through the development of parent-run charter schools. The Toronto board operates a number of alternative schools under its umbrella. How do those differ in your view from the charter school or even the kind of privatization school that might develop?

Mr Moll: First of all, the alternative schools that Toronto operates — and we have probably more than any other jurisdiction in Ontario — operate under the rubric certainly of Ministry of Education guidelines and they are nonrestrictive in terms of their entry. They have various focuses or foci that they draw attention to, but they are not charter schools. I am concerned, frankly. It strikes me that the logical place Bill 104 would lead at some point in the future is to a complete breakdown of the kind of public system of education that has been enjoyed in this province for a number of years. Charter schools? I would be very concerned that that is where this would lead. I think it will lead there.

Mr Wildman: I have a question and then I have a question for the parliamentary assistant. I must say that I was encouraged by Ms Johns's intervention previously in which she was indicating that all of the students across Ontario should be raised to the funding level of the students in Metro Toronto.

Mrs Johns: I didn't say that. Check the Hansard; don't misquote me.

The Chair: Excuse me. Mr Wildman.

Mr Wildman: I wasn't trying to be provocative. But then I was discouraged by the parliamentary assistant's intervention. I would like to give you a chance to answer the question that he posed, and then I have a question for him. Do you expect that the full amount that you now collect in property taxes to fund education in Toronto, in your board, will be forthcoming in grants from the provincial government starting in 1998?

Mr Moll: There's no doubt in my mind that the government is not going through this exercise so that we can end up at sum zero. Accordingly, the intent is to extract substantial sums of money from Toronto public schools. Part of the problem that a number of us have with the government's — the minister certainly has made the statement that he doesn't want things to affect the classroom and I have some sympathy with that. However, the definition of the classroom that the minister has or appears to be using simply is not the definition of what a classroom is in anyone's common understanding of that word in this day and age. It might have been in the last century; it isn't today.

With respect to Ms Johns's comments earlier, certainly I'm not looking to in any way deprive the students of Huron county of a reasonable education, or the people of Lanark or any other part of the world of what they have, but what we've asked is, "Don't take it from us to try to improve someone else's lot." Abraham Lincoln — I'm afraid I can't give you the exact quote, but I suggest that this should have some appeal to any Conservative

government — said that you don't build up the worker by tearing down the employer. You don't do something for somebody that they ought to do for themselves. That quote goes on and on.

What are you talking about in terms of what you've got in store for us? I think that's really Mr Wildman's question. We'd like to know what you have in store before you dismantle what we have now. All boards right now have the ability, through provincial grants, to receive what the government determines to be an adequate, reasonable, basic education.

Many boards have access to very large assessment bases which they do not fully access because they have chosen in their own minds that their ratepayers aren't prepared to pay for those additional services. There is a balance right now that works. What is proposed is buried in some, as far as I know, yet unwritten regulations. What we've asked for here is, what kind of assurances are you going to give us that what we have now, we will have when you finish this process?

The Chair: Thank you very much for coming today. Mr Wildman: I have a question for the parliamentary assistant. I would like to know if the government would entertain an amendment to Bill 104 which would incorporate Mr Moll's bill of rights for students in the legislation?

The Chair: We'll refer that to the parliamentary assistant for a future time.

Mr Wildman: I guess the answer was no.

The Chair: He hasn't responded. We'll defer that in fairness to people who are here.

### LYN ADAMSON

The Chair: We now have Lyn Adamson and what I believe may be the youngest presenter, her son John.

Lyn Adamson: I really appreciate the chance to speak. I had asked to speak before this committee but hadn't heard from anyone and just came this morning. I'm speaking from impromptu notes right now, but I really appreciate the opportunity to tell you my concerns.

I'm a parent of two children in Toronto schools: Jonathan is 10 years old in grade 5 at Orde Street school, which is right across College Street on the south side. My daughter Nicole is in grade 9, in extended French, at Oakwood high school.

Of course, I am very concerned about the quality of their education and of all the other students in Toronto schools and in Ontario schools in general. I agree with previous comments that more needs to be spent across the province. We're not trying to have anything more for our children than we feel should be extended to anyone who has the same needs in any other boards of education, any other schools that have those same needs.

I'm extremely concerned about class sizes. This was the point that Jonathan brought up this morning: There are 32 kids in his class; 37 in the class next door. This is grade 5. These are classes that have several students with learning disabilities and students for whom English is their second language. The teachers simply cannot cope. It's a question of crowd control. This has already happened as a result not of provincial cuts, particularly at

this point, since those are just starting to have their impact, but the taxation appeals. But we can see the direction that things are headed if money is cut out of our schools.

I want to say that we haven't been given a vision of the education that Mr Snobelen thinks our children should have, but I am extremely concerned that it's not going to contain many things that I think are vital to children's education in terms of becoming responsible citizens in the world of today. I'll give you some examples of programs that I am concerned about.

In Toronto, we have one staff person for the entire board whose job it is to promote environmental education throughout the system. That person works with trustees, teachers and parents, through the parents' environmental action group of which I am a part, to try and bring environmental education into our schools. Will this staff position be maintained in the face of cuts? I doubt it very much.

# 1220

The Toronto Board of Education has three staff whose job it is to teach conflict resolution programs throughout the 150 schools, to train the teachers, to train students in schools to bring conflict resolution into the classroom. Are we going to have those three staff when Mr Snobelen is done? If we don't think conflict resolution is an important skill for young people to learn across the province as well as in Toronto, then I think we're really missing out. In terms of quality of education, that to me is extremely important.

Toronto has been a leader in anti-racist education. This is extremely important. Look at the city we have, the complete mix we have. Oakwood high school I think is the most diverse school in the entire city, but they're all extremely diverse. They have people from many different backgrounds. If we don't have anti-racist policies, if we don't have anti-racist programs that educate and involve youth in combating racist ideas that are being brought in all the time from the fringes, we're really going to be in trouble. Look at those incidents that have happened that have involved racially motivated violence. They have been extremely destructive.

We don't want that to happen. We can't forget that prevention is the only way to contain that and to manage it and to educate our students for a future that will be a society for all and not just for one over another, which is another thing I hate to see, people pitted one against another or regions like 416 pitted against 905. I think that's extremely sad. I grew up in the 905 belt; now I live in the 416 area. I think we're aware of certain things, living downtown, that people in outlying areas don't see every day, but it's really important that we work together to create the future, because it's the same future for all our children.

The alternative schools were mentioned before, and I want to say that my children have at one point or another been in alternative schools and I have seen many of the alternative schools the board runs offer special programs to kids who would otherwise not be able to cope in the classroom. They're extremely important to continue. Are they going to continue if the control of education is taken away?

A lot has been made about cost-cutting, but I already know that the Toronto board and other boards are working together to eliminate costs in terms of busing and in terms of purchasing. Those things can be achieved without taking away the democratic control that's inherent in having a local board of education. Some of the things the local board trustees do — most of them are full-time right now — is they attend meetings so that they can dialogue directly with parents, they are on these committees which hear directly with parents and often have a combined membership with parents, including race relations, status of women, environmental and health issues, parent involvement. Those are some of the committees that the trustees and parents are on.

They have control and flexibility. They have funding control and they have flexibility in how they use the funds so that they can respond to parents. If there are parent delegations to the Toronto board, they hear everybody. Everybody gets their five minutes, at least, to speak to the trustees, even if it means staying all night. I have to contrast that with what this has been, where nobody has a guarantee of their right to speak even for a few minutes in front of this group. I really appreciate the

opportunity to do that.

I think there is an appropriateness of scale that has to be considered. When I keep hearing about mega-this and mega-that, I think, who has forgotten the phrase, "Small is beautiful"? Small is community. Small is the neighbourhood. Small is an accessible level of government that people can relate to, that people can extend themselves to. People can walk to or easily get to the board of education to be involved. I think we need to look at appropriate scale for involvement. As we've seen, the actual cost of providing that level at the board is very

little. The trustees themselves cost us very, very little in

the overall picture of education.

The minister has promised that we will have improved quality of education for all children, but I don't know what that means. I've mentioned some of the programs I am concerned about. I am also going to mention a few others. What about reading clinics? Right now, there's a waiting list already for reading clinics. What will happen if the funding cuts go ahead? Learning centres, teaching assistants in the classroom, nutrition programs? We've already heard about how large a percentage of poor people there are within the city, and that's increasing because of increasing unemployment and will increase further as a result of the other changes this government is proposing to make around downloading and all the other changes that cannot be separated from this bill.

There are heritage language programs. Black heritage: My son is lucky enough to benefit from one class a week with everyone else at his school in black heritage, which is extremely important to the pride and knowledge of all students. Not just students with black heritage themselves but all students need to know what that heritage means for all of us. It's a big part of the student body and it's important for everyone to have that. Again, it's part of the anti-racist education that's really vital.

What about green playgrounds in our schools? We've been able to benefit from playground improvement. We have really old schools and really old schoolyards, but we have been able to benefit from funds that the Toronto board allocated, finally, after years of waiting, to play-ground improvement. Is that ever going to happen when these budget cuts come through? The trustee and the local councillor, who would be eliminated under Bill 103, have worked together with the community to create a green space next to our school. That has required a lot of negotiation and work together with the local hospital, Ontario Hydro, the school and everything. That's very time-consuming, and that's another thing trustees do: work on projects with local communities to achieve things that are really important to that local community and just would get lost in a mega-Metro arrangement.

I want to conclude simply by saying that I feel the overall effect of the changes this government is proposing to make will be increasing middle-class flight from the city and from the public schools. For example, if I couldn't get a reading clinic, would I have to hire a tutor? Would I have to put my son in a private school, which I can't afford anyway? People shouldn't be faced with that choice. We need to be able to offer a good quality of education so that the middle class will invest in our schools, will participate in our schools. We need to ensure that there's a good quality of education for all, and that's the only way to do it. All our communities depend on it. Studies have shown that if school quality goes down and if people cannot get a good education locally, that increases middle-class flight and it increases the deterioration in quality of life in the neighbourhood.

Those are my points. Thanks for the opportunity to

speak

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Adamson, and thank you, Jonathan. We have time for one short question from each of the caucuses.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you for being here out of pure concern and also for being willing to make your presentation without much prior notice. Thank you also for outlining the sense of the extra things that are important to kids in the classroom that are being done within the Toronto schools, because I think we need that understanding, and also for talking about the sense of community and community partnerships being achieved. It's important for those of us who are from outside of Toronto maybe particularly to understand the richness of community that takes place because of the ability to work at a local level.

I'll ask you one quick question and then you can comment on that. One of the things the parliamentary secretary indicated earlier today was that you shouldn't be worried about whether those unique needs are going to be recognized in the funding formula because the stakeholders will be involved in developing the funding formula. I'm wondering, as a parent, whether that gives you comfort.

Lyn Adamson: It doesn't, because I have no assurance that what I and my community consider priorities are going to be considered priorities by the Minister of Education or his staff. People have to be involved in setting those priorities in their community and have to know that the funding's going to be there to meet those needs.

I also wanted to say that the staff I mentioned — the one staff for environmental education we have and the three staff for conflict resolution — facilitate volunteer involvement of a lot of other people. If that infrastructure isn't there, that volunteer involvement is doubly hard to get if there's no one there to facilitate it, to work with it, to make it happen. We must remember that that's needed.

Mr Wildman: I ask this question with some trepidation because of the controversy I started when I asked my last question. I misinterpreted what the Conservative Party position was, that they want to raise everybody to \$8,000. I guess the opposite may be the case, that they want to lower everybody to \$4,000. I wonder if —

Mrs Johns: Objection. He's starting to try and guess our intent. If that happens in the House — you know

that's not able to happen.

**Mr Wildman:** Well, let's compromise and say they want to bring everybody to \$6,000.

The Chair: Mr Wildman, you know you cannot impute motive, but please feel free to proceed.

Mr Wildman: I don't think she has any motives.

I'm trying to figure out where the money is, which is what we're all about here. If it means bringing everyone to \$6,000, with some flexibility, which is what has been said, are you satisfied that the kinds of programs you've talked about, the green program, the conflict resolution program, the race relations program, the heritage programs and so on that are so important to your children's experience, will be maintained?

Lyn Adamson: Absolutely not. I think they'll have to go, because what are you going to sacrifice instead? Class sizes are really too high as they are. We don't want to do without reading clinic — we can't, okay? — or the learning centre; we can't do without the library, we can't do without ESL. We want to have music and phys ed. That's a natural, good part of any child's education. We used to have swimming. That's been cut. There are things that really need to be there to bring our children up properly in the world. I think we're all jointly responsible for that and I can't see how we'll possibly get it if the money is being cut.

We're not being told what the vision is. We're not having laid out, "You'll definitely get this, this and this, whatever it costs." We're not being told that. There are no guarantees.

1230

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): Thank you very much for coming. I represent the people of St Catharines and Brock, which includes all of Niagara-on-the-Lake and half of St Catharines. The concern from parents in my riding is their involvement in the education system or in their schools. Their concern has been that while they appreciate the school boards and what they've been doing, they've seen an increase in the dollars that go to things like the school board building itself instead of those dollars coming into their schools. Obviously, parent involvement is very important to you or you wouldn't be here today with your son. Could you just tell me, in the short time we have, if we want to strengthen the parents' role in our schools, how do we do that? Do you have any advice on that?

Lyn Adamson: For one thing, you've got to have the parent involvement committee, which is a joint committee of parents and trustees working together to increase parent involvement. You can't rely on parents to do everything themselves, which is what I'm afraid we're headed for. There has to be an infrastructure to make that parent involvement meaningful, to make it happen.

I don't think our Toronto board building has been treated with luxury. I haven't seen any renovations happening there. It seems to be a pretty basic building,

compared to this one.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Adamson, for staying all morning, and thank you, Jonathan.

### LOW INCOME FAMILIES TOGETHER

The Chair: Our next presenter is Low Income Fam-

ilies Together. Are they here?

Ms Deborah Frenette: Good afternoon. My name is Deborah Frenette, and I'm a representative of Low Income Families Together. Thank you for hearing our

brief today at such short notice.

We are concerned that the powers of the school board are threatened and reduced by spreading the trustees too thin over such a wide area. The changes proposed by this bill will create the largest school board in the province, probably in Canada. Bigger is not better, especially when we're talking about education. The proposed Education Improvement Commission can't possibly understand the needs of a community in which they don't reside. The issues of the day for small communities are made irrelevant by the very size and distance of a group that's so far removed and unaware. We don't feel that increasing the ratio of student to trustee is a wise move, nor do we feel the cost savings can justify the harm that will result.

We feel that paying school trustees \$5,000 a year means this is a job for the middle and upper classes and not for low-income people. Obviously, low-income people can't afford to work for \$5,000 a year and they won't have a job that will allow them to take this as a

part-time, frilly job.

We feel this bill is a disaster for the low-income community. At this time, needs among our poor people are escalating, this largely due to economic restraints and the draconian cuts to the incomes of many families, cuts made by this government. Metro Toronto has needs that demand more: Our varied population means that more resettlement demands and English-as-a-second-language classes are necessary. Children in one school in an innercity area here in Toronto represent 62 different languages. Poverty is higher in Metro and our need for funding for inner-city schools is high. Bill 104 will remove the funds ring our families to cope in tough times. To cut \$1 billion from the system is bound to affect programming.

We understand that this government has been repeating that only 55% of the school board budget comprises inclassroom and the rest of the budget, the remaining 45%, is administration. My own MPP has been repeating this at meetings; I've heard him. Therefore, according to this faulty line of reasoning, there's a lot of fat to be cut. That's simply not so. I wish to point out some of the fine

programs paid for by that 45%, many programs that assist low-income families to deal with the additional stresses poverty imposes on their families. I can do this because I am a sole-support parent and was able to bring up my children in a very low-income situation successfully, much of the success due to the programs that were available at my board of education.

The programs in the board here in Toronto are internationally recognized and acclaimed, like the school yard conflict resolution model, with programs modeled after

that elsewhere.

Within that 45% are necessary programs that should be strengthened, not defunded. The lunch room program is vital for mothers who must go to work and aren't able to be at home when the child comes home for lunch. It is not safe to allow the children to come home to an empty home at lunch or after school. Many working mothers are forced to work and leave their children at what must be low-cost after-school programs. Up until now these programs have been good and of high quality. Funding cuts will have to compromise the quality of these programs.

The breakfast programs have been very valuable to working parents and to those forced to rely on assistance, and we all know the importance of a hearty breakfast to learning minds. Despite the claim made last year by Premier Harris, many children are coming to school hungry because of the cuts to welfare and due to the low wages paid for many in part-time and contract work or service sector jobs. They're coming hungry because there's a lack of food in the home, not because mom's too busy to cook in the morning. There just isn't the money for food.

It's been supported by surveys of food bank recipients done by the Daily Bread Food Bank: Families in Metro Toronto actually plan to skip meals so they can make ends meet. Mothers go hungry, and children are still being forced to go hungry. We at LIFT far prefer that mothers are able to feed their children at home because there is enough money to do so. The preparation and sharing of food at home is an important part of family life — I'm sure you'll agree with me there — but the current situation is forcing the schools to offer the daily bread to the children. The support for the food programs at the schools must grow, perhaps even to include lunch. These programs are all part of the 45%. We'd also like to comment that we don't want to rely on corporate charity for these vital programs, these food programs in the schools.

We are fearful that many boards will lose the important junior kindergarten program. Leaving the program to the discretion of the board may mean that funding squeezes will force the boards to drop this program entirely. This hits low-income families the hardest, as there's no money in the household to send children to private nursery school, which is the option available to higher-income families. This means that poor kids will begin their schooling disadvantaged as a result of the loss of junior kindergarten.

The school social work departments have become even more central to student needs as we face unemployment and major changes to the structure of our society. For example, lack of jobs places stress on families. It's a known fact that unemployed family members tend to take their stress out on other family members. Women are faced with growing abuse at the hands of their male partners while resources to assist these families are shrinking. The families need the school social work department, as these trained counsellors help children in crisis to remain in school and help the family deal with the needs. We pay in school or we pay in hospital and penal costs. I have accessed this type of help after I was injured in a car accident. I found the intervention my children and I needed quickly and compassionately through our small school system in East York. 1240

Cutbacks also force more stress on the already strained non-profit day care centres in the schools. The maintenance staff clean and maintain the day care along with the rest of the school. They also provide free or low-cost space for day care in schools. Can you guarantee that this support will remain in place while the services are contracted out? Caretaking staff are an important part of the school landscape. Will the caretaker remain the same person year after year, as is so often the case in our present system?

We're concerned that the revenues from business for education under your proposal will be kept in the community in which they are raised. That's what's being suggested here. This ensures that wealthy communities, which are benefiting from the shift of tax revenue upward from the tax cuts, will ensure good-quality education for well-off neighbourhoods and a lack of resources for poor communities like St James Town, for example. The Honourable Al Leach can tell you that St James Town. which is found in his riding, is suffering following the social assistance cuts and is populated by many working poor. Business is hurting — and I know; I've talked to the Cabbagetown business association — and they'll have less revenue to pay for education.

The effect of not pooling business tax for education can be seen in the US school system. I'd like to provide you with a few examples taken from a book by well-

known author Linda McQuaig:

"East St Louis High in the grim city of East St Louis, Illinois, has to shut from time to time because of sewage backing up from the sewer system in the school's basement and into the kitchen area. The school relies on some 70 'permanent substitute teachers' who are paid only US\$10,000 per year. In the physics lab, there is no running water at the six lab stations, only empty holes where pipes were once attached. There is a football field, but it has no goalposts, except a couple of metal pipes stuck into the ground. At nearby Clark Junior High School, 30 students are crammed into a classroom only big enough for 15. In the boys' washroom, four of the six toilets don't work and the toilet stalls have no doors. There is no soap or no paper towels.'

In contrast, "At New Trier High School in a rich suburb of Chicago, school takes on the feel of a country club. Situated on 27 acres, New Trier has seven gymnasiums, an Olympic pool, a fencing room and studios for dance instruction. The school labs are fitted with the latest technology. School facilities and grounds are

maintained in immaculate condition by a staff of 48 janitors. In addition to the full range of regular academic subjects, there is a wide variety of courses in music, drama, modern and classical languages, as well as aeronautics, criminal justice and computer languages. Every student has a 'faculty adviser' who offers personal counselling." How about that for a contrast?

This comparison offers a very startling contrast. It is now daily life in the US, and we're on the way to this in our province. I strongly believe this. School can offer so much to a student. The irony of life is not lost on me in this situation. It is the poor child who needs the stability of a good school and a good teacher to help him or her escape the fate that awaits those who are uneducated and poor. I have found that life is made more bearable by having good reading skills and access to literature to improve my mind and escape the drudgery of a hard life. I am grateful for the chance that both my children and I had to get an education in a pubic system that allowed us to be educated, despite its flaws.

Without quality education it is not probable that the poor kid can make it in this society or even understand the forces that conspire to keep him or her poor and enslaved. Take away their education and you take away their rights. This was done to Afro-Americans when they were enslaved in the southern US. Slaves were not

allowed to read, for obvious reasons.

We are asking that this change be made slowly and carefully, with due democratic process. We cannot support any change this major done in a way that you want to ram it through and hurry it up. We demand that a full understanding of the effect of this bill on lowincome families be fully understood before it is implemented.

We at LIFT believe that morality dictates that all the children of our Creator be given full life chances in order to best serve their communities and their life purpose. We believe that all of society is served well when struggling parents are supported and assisted in bringing up the child who will grow into a responsible, caring human. We value our spiritual commitment to sharing the earth's resources fairly and our responsibility to the common good, not in the competition of the individual against the

Please, consult with care and be compassionate. The future of our children and therefore our world is in our hands.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Frenette. You've used up all your 15 minutes. I regret that. Thank you so much for coming and making your presentation today on behalf of the entire committee.

We have a matter that we deferred till the end of the session. Mr Wildman, did you want to ask your question

of the parliamentary assistant?

Mr Wildman: Yes. I wanted to know from the parliamentary assistant whether the government would entertain an amendment to Bill 104 which would incorporate Mr Moll's bill of rights for students.

Mr Skarica: I'll review it with our department. If you feel that you wish to introduce it as an amendment, you're certainly free to do so at the end of the hearings.

The Chair: We are recessed until 3:30. I would ask the subcommittee members to stay behind.

Mr Wildman: I have a meeting. The Chair: At 3:30 or now?

Mr Wildman: At 12:15; it's now a quarter to 1.

The Chair: We're going to have to continue without him, I guess.

The committee recessed from 1247 to 1532.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, we're back in session. Just before we start with our first presenter, Ted Glenn has put a memo on each of our desks. Ted, would you like to speak to it.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Chair: In light of the discussion this morning and the comments just made by the minister in the scrum upstairs that funding for education might go up, I would like to move a formal motion that we invite members of the ministry staff to appear before the committee to explain the new funding formula and how it's being arrived at.

The Chair: Is there a seconder?

Mrs Caplan: I second the motion.

The Chair: Very well. Is there any debate? Do we have agreement?

Interjections: No.

The Chair: All right, there is no agreement. The motion is defeated.

Mr Wildman: I would like a formal vote.

The Chair: You would like a recorded vote. All right, then we'll go for a vote.

Ayes

Caplan, McLeod, Wildman.

Navs

Carroll, Froese, Johns, Pettit, Skarica, Smith.

The Chair: The motion is defeated.

Mrs McLeod: In relation to that, if we can't have the ministry present to speak to it, I assume that we will still get all written information that the ministry can provide about the development of the funding formula as well as the specific dollar figures that are proposed.

The Chair: A request for that information has been

made. Ted?

Mr Ted Glenn: This morning Bud Wildman requested information about the extent of public consultations on the new education funding mechanisms. I've distributed a memo in response to that request. If you have any questions, you can contact me directly.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Our first pres-

enter -

Mr Wildman: Sorry, excuse me. According to this memo, the consultation will not begin until April and extend until June. That will be, according to the government schedule, after this bill has already passed.

Mrs Caplan: That's also contrary to what the parlia-

mentary assistant said this morning.

Interjection.

Mr Wildman: This doesn't have anything to do with funding? School board governance doesn't have anything to do with funding? Oh.

Mrs McLeod: I think it's important that we all understand that what is being dealt with in Bill 104 is very specifically the appointment of an education commission which will oversee all board budgets for the current year. To suggest that this bill doesn't have anything to do with school board spending, and therefore funding formulas, is simply not true.

**The Chair:** We have that for the record. I'm in your hands. Is there anything that you want further?

Mrs McLeod: In addition then to the information that we've requested on the funding formula, which the government members are suggesting is for some future action, I would request information from the Ministry of Education as to exactly what funding directives are going to be put in place by the, as I guess I have to call it, Education Improvement Commission, the EIC, which will direct board spending for the current year.

The Chair: All right, so noted, a request for informa-

tion.

# ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' FEDERATION

The Chair: We are now proceeding this afternoon with the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. Mr Manners, welcome. I would ask you to introduce your co-presenters. You have 15 minutes. You may use it as you wish but if you have any time left over, there will be questions from the three caucuses.

Mr Earl Manners: Thank you very much. I'll try and make sure that there is time left over. The two people with me are Larry French, our legislative researcher, and David Moss, an executive assistant with the Ontario

Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

I would like to thank you for at least the limited time that is available to make our views known on Bill 104. In the interests of democracy and public accountability, though, I would urge you to expand the hearings and the hearing dates so that the large number of people who wish to comment won't be denied a chance to participate in the democratic process.

Bill 104 is the education omnibus bill. It is, for the most part, about giving the minister the power to act by regulation. The minister will have unilateral control over education decision-making, far beyond anything to do with amalgamation. In fact, in the bill there is no mention of the number of new school boards, the number of trustees or their salary, but it does give the minister power to make decisions on things ranging from govern-

ance to funding and operation of schools.

If Bill 104 were about amalgamation, it would look like 1968 legislation enacted by a previous Tory government, which reduced the number of school boards on an even greater scale. That government did not need the extraordinary powers of Bill 104. It was able to define, by legislation, the parameters of school board amalgamation, a transition process that was open and transparent and included guarantees for board employees. I don't understand why this government can't introduce the same kind of legislation. It leaves open the very fundamental question, what are they trying to hide?

The Education Improvement Commission, which is an oxymoron if there ever was one, is a group of unelected, politically appointed commissioners who will have powers that place it even above the Legislature and the MPPs in this room, it will have powers to supersede the Ministry of Education and Training, and it will have powers that place it above the law and above the citizens of this province. If they act discriminatorily, unfairly or unjustly, it can't even be appealed to the courts. In addition, it's not even subject to the Statutory Powers Procedure Act. These kinds of powers are like the War Measures Act, but we're not at war, unless we're at war with public education.

The irony is that the EIC has the ability to use the courts for its own purposes. In a ministry document entitled Questions and Answers on Education Restructuring that was approved on January 17, 1997, the following question was posed, "If the board does not obey the commission, what powers are at the commission's disposal to enforce compliance?" The answer:

"We are confident that the legislation puts the commission on solid legal ground. The commission will have some teeth. For example, if the commission orders a board to provide information about its activities, the commission can file that order with the General Division of the Ontario Court. That order is then enforceable as if it were a court order. In some cases, there are fairly strong sanctions. If the commission orders the board to retain an auditor, any attempt to obstruct that auditor can be punished by a fine or imprisonment." 1540

Why the difference? Why does the EIC have such powers but citizens don't have the right to appeal to a court? I think there's a basic reason. We know that Bill 104 is not about amalgamation; it's about finding a further \$1 billion in cutbacks to education. Amalgamation is being used as a smokescreen. This government has already broken its promise to guarantee classroom funding and now, in an attempt to gloss over that, it's totally redefined the classroom through the study it commissioned from Ernst and Young.

In that study, the classroom doesn't include the libraries in our schools, library books, librarians, guidance counsellors, principals and vice-principals, special education support services, office and clerical staff, custodial maintenance staff, transportation, the heating and lighting of the classroom, and preparation time to make sure we meet individual school needs. This is scary because these are fundamental to any classroom that our teachers and education workers are part of. In fact, we believe the whole school is a classroom.

It does raise the question, who will be responsible for these services? I have a very important question to address the Conservative MPPs here. Bill 104, if adopted, establishes new school boards to be called district school boards, but nowhere in Bill 104 is there any provision which would empower these district school boards to raise required funds or moneys by way of residential or commercial property tax. I believe I'm correct that they will not have the power to tax. Is that true? I'm assuming that's true. The public is entitled to an answer.

If no taxation power is to be provided, then how will any particular district school board and its trustees raise the extra money that it believes is required to provide necessary educational services like the services that have just been defined as outside of the classroom? If new school boards won't be able to pay and the province isn't paying, who will?

Bill 104 says that the commission has the power to outsource business and support service functions. That suggests, in fact it more than suggests, that municipalities are going to be responsible for these services. That's the ticking time bomb of Bill 104. These so-called nonclassroom services - other instructional support, custodial maintenance, capital construction and school transportation — could end up on the backs of municipalities and

municipal taxpayers.

Using Ernst and Young's own figures, so the government can't say that we're manipulating statistics - these are the government's own figures — that amounts to \$2.8 billion in added burden to municipal taxes provincially, \$2.8 billion you can see there. These are the services that are not being counted as classroom, that the municipalities have to pick up. That's the cost - not just an \$860million oversight, an additional \$2.8 billion.

In Metropolitan Toronto alone that amounts to \$592,947,269 of additional burden on the municipal taxpayer. In a place like Windsor, it's over \$47.5 million; in Timmins, it's almost \$14 million of additional burden to those taxpayers. In the Premier's own riding in Nipissing, \$28,543,822. I can go on. In Kenora, it's \$7.5 million. In York region, the 905 belt, it is \$188,428,248 of additional municipal tax burden on that region alone. In the east, in Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry, it would be over \$34 million. These are just examples.

I believe the public has a right to know what guarantee the government will make to taxpayers that costs the government defines as non-classroom, a total of approximately \$2.8 billion, will not be added to their municipal taxes in addition to all the other costs downloaded on municipalities. Can the government make that guarantee

here today? The silence is deafening.

Ontario has already fallen to 46th place in per pupil expenditures in Canada and the US. The provincial government, I say to you, must rededicate itself to supporting public education and not pass a death sentence on it by a thousand cuts, nor should it be ideologically supporting the privatization of a great public education

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Manners. We have four minutes or a bit more.

Mr Wildman: How much time?

The Chair: You have just over a minute.

Mr Wildman: I will have a question for the parliamentary assistant after.

You heard the exchange just before we began, Mr Manners, where Mr Froese, my friend from St Catharines-Brock, said that Bill 104 has nothing to do with education funding, yet the chair of the public school trustees said this morning that she expects boards will have to pay for the capital they've been approved for this year out of operating grants for next year. You've said this could mean a \$2.8-billion download to municipalities.

How do you square those different statements? Is Bill 104 just about amalgamation or does it have to do with

school funding?

Mr Manners: It has everything to do with school funding. You can't talk about amalgamation and governance, and then give this transition commission the power to make recommendations on things like outsourcing and the role of school councils and the general operations of schools and not have it affect funding. The two are inextricably linked. We have notes taken from when the minister and the deputy minister met with the directors of education a week or so ago where they both said that capital costs would still have to be funded partially from the local level.

Mr Wildman: How can they do that if they can't tax? Mr Manners: That's what I'm saying. It has to come from the municipality, so there's a potential \$2.8-billion

cost on the municipal taxpayer.

Let me add one other point. Today we asked the ministry to give us the 1995 per pupil expenditures as they calculate every year. We were denied access to those figures, even though they're ready, because it would create, and I quote, "confusion" with the release of the

other study by Ernst and Young.

Mr Skarica: Thank you, Mr Manners. I just want to ask you some questions about the 1969 legislation because things have changed quite a bit since that time. As you're aware, a number of trustees have voted themselves severance packages. In fact, when we were preparing this legislation, a number of alarmed trustees on various boards throughout the province phoned me, worried that their colleagues were going to vote themselves severance packages and those types of things. So this legislation is designed to prevent that type of abuse of trust by certain individuals. I'm not saying they're all going to do that. How would you propose to deal with that situation? It is a real problem and one the government's concerned about.

Mr Manners: I don't think things have changed much since 1968. That former Progressive Conservative government amalgamated far more boards than are being proposed here and it was able to do it by legislation and not by imposing these extraordinary powers. You can set up a transition committee that is not above the law, but can still oversee the amalgamation of certain school boards and still be subject to all the rules and regulations that govern everyone else in this society.

With respect to the severance issue, you know as well as I do that no trustee in this province since Bill 104 was introduced ever passed any law that would grant them a severance package. If some school boards have a severance package, I say to you, it is exactly the same as the

one that is in place for MPPs.

Mrs McLeod: Let me focus on the whole issue of the cost of the amalgamation, which you've also done, in suggesting that one of the costs may be a shift of \$2.8 billion on to the municipal tax base. The Ernst and Young study that looked at where there might be some savings, and I think the ministry identified \$150 million, confirmed that was realistic, but that study also said in the introduction that costs could go up under amalgamation. The Ministry of Education's response to that, and this is all in writing, was that they shouldn't be concerned about costs going up because the Ministry of Education would take control of educational finance and that would solve it.

If they don't move \$2.8 billion on to the property tax base for the non-instructional costs, how do you think they can stop the costs from going up under amalgamation? That is certainly not what the government wants to

do, to see costs go up.

Mr Manners: They'll have to put ceilings on various costs. As we've seen through the Ernst and Young study, they will redefine the classroom to make sure certain things are no longer considered to be a compulsory or mandatory part of the education system. They will implement user fees for parents so that if a young child needs speech-language services, they'll have to go to a private contractor to get it rather than having direct access to it through the school system. That is something that directly affects their ability to learn.

Obviously the only way they can hold costs down through amalgamation is to cut services. The studies that were done on three areas over the last few years about amalgamation — I'm thinking of Windsor-Essex, London-Middlesex and Ottawa-Carleton - all said that amalgamation does cost money if it's going to be done

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Manners, to

you and your delegation.

Mrs McLeod: A question, please, for the parliamentary assistant or the ministry to respond to: Given the fact that the Ernst and Young study clearly says this amalgamation proposal could lead to increased costs, and clearly there have been statements made that suggest one of the ways of dealing with that is to shift a significant portion of costs to the municipal tax base, could we place the question to the ministry as to what guarantees there will be that there will not be educational costs paid for by the municipality, and that includes non-instructional costs.

The Chair: So noted and it'll be forwarded to the

ministry.

Thank you very much. Time is always too short —

Mr Wildman: Excuse me, Madam Chair, I understand the time frame we have here, but when we pose a question to the parliamentary assistant, he's not sitting here just to have fun, he's here to answer questions.

Mr Skarica: No, I am not.

Mr Manners: Well, I'd like an answer to my question.

Mr Wildman: Surely he's here as the representative of the minister. We're not forwarding questions to the minister: we're forwarding questions to Mr Skarica.

The Chair: Point well taken.

Mr Skarica: My answer is I'll take it under advisement, Mr Wildman, and get back to you.

Mr Manners: Can I not get an answer to the question of whether or not Bill 104 allows school boards to raise residential and commercial taxes?

Mr Skarica: You didn't answer my question, so I

think I'm not here to answer questions.

Mrs Caplan: You're supposed to answer the questions. He's supposed to ask them.

The Chair: I appreciate that. If I could thank you, Mr Manners, time is extremely short.

Mrs Caplan: These people are supposed to answer the questions. I would like to know. Are these people who've asked a very specific question going to get an answer? If they're not, I'll request that it be answered in writing.

The Chair: Over to the parliamentary assistant.

Mr Skarica: Ask me the question then.
Mrs Caplan: Are you going to answer it?

Mr Skarica: Are you going to ask me the question?

Mrs Caplan: The question is?

The Chair: Mr Manners, the question?

Mr Manners: The question was, if I can repeat, nowhere in Bill 104 is there any provision which would empower these district school boards to raise required funds or moneys by way of residential or commercial property tax. Why not and will they be able to? Yes or no.

Mr Wildman: And if not, will the municipalities have

to do it?

Mr Skarica: I'll check with the ministry.

The Chair: Do you have the question, Mr Skarica?

Mr Skarica: Yes.

Mr Manners: Thank you.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate the frustration of the Chair because we're dealing with issues in this legislation that there seems to be no forum to discuss.

I want to be absolutely clear that in the Ernst and Young study, which was the ministry's own support document for the amalgamation costs, the statement is made that there are two areas in which there could be a significant increase in costs: One is in the harmonization of services between boards and the other is in the harmonization of salaries between the boards.

We have no opportunity at any point in these hearings to explore either of those issues in depth and I'd ask the committee to consider where those two issues can be examined because they are fundamental to what is taking place with this legislation.

Mr Manners: If I may, and I know we've run out of time, but in those same documents I referred to where

time, but in those same there are brief notes —

Mr Carroll: Point of order, Ms Castrilli.

Mr Manners: — the minister and his deputy both said that there would be significantly fewer jobs as a result of Bill 104.

Mr Carroll: Point of order, Ms Castrilli: I understood that we approved a subcommittee report this morning that

gave 15 minutes per deputation, not 25.

The Chair: Yes, Mr Carroll, we did indeed approve that. Mr Manners, thank you very much. Time is always too short. We appreciate your being here on such short notice.

The next presenter is Ms Fiona Nelson.

Mrs McLeod: As Ms Nelson comes forward, the only reason that there was a subcommittee report that agreed to these time lines was because of the restriction through the government's time allocation motion on the total amount of time for hearings and the fact that we were looking at 1,058 people who wanted to present. I don't think the government's time allocation motion can be used as an excuse for the government not to present

factual information in response to specific questions, and that should not be done during the time we have for hearings. What we're requesting is some forum in which we can at least ask the government these very specific questions and so far the government has denied us that opportunity.

Mr Skarica: You have it now, and I will do the best

I can

The Chair: So noted, the questions have been asked of the parliamentary assistant.

Mrs McLeod: We did this morning, or earlier, and we had a vote by the government members to defeat being able to have ministry people here.

The Chair: We'll await the response to the questions

that have been raised this afternoon.

#### FIONA NELSON

The Chair: Ms Nelson, thank you very much for

coming. You have 15 minutes.

Ms Fiona Nelson: I'd like to thank you for giving me one of the unallocated times in order to address you face to face. Forty-two years ago, I was trained as a kindergarten teacher at Hamilton Teachers' College. I taught first at a school in a rural part of Scarborough. A huge subdivision had been built south of the school that summer and hundreds of children, baby-boomers, appeared at that little six-room school.

Many portables had been hastily erected that summer in the field behind the school, and in November, 10 more were needed. I was the assistant to the kindergarten directress and between us we attempted to provide, in the school gym, a program for 72 children in the morning class and another 72 children in the afternoon class.

Until Christmas, we had virtually no equipment or supplies apart from a piano, two desks and two attendance registers. We really learned to improvise. The per pupil costs must have been very low, but so was the per pupil benefit. In the ensuing 40-plus years, I've continued to work in various capacities for the needs of little children, and there has been a change, lots of change, as well as significant improvement in programs and facilities for those little children.

Since the Hope commission of 1950, many reports have been submitted to a parade of ministers of education, health and community and social services on what is needed to enable Ontario's children to start school ready to learn and to benefit from their instruction.

I've read those reports. Without exception, they recommend front-end-loading the system, enhancing the life chances of children from conception on. This was the Premier's Council report called Yours, Mine and Ours. This one is called Children First and it was chaired by Colin Maloney, the head of the Catholic children's aid. This one is from the Carnegie Foundation in New York and, once again, it echoes, as has every report since the Hope commission, the need to front-end-load the system.

But I have to ask what reports the minister is referring to when he cuts the grants to junior kindergarten, cancels class size limits, forbids capital spending for junior kindergarten and child care facilities. I could go on and on. As I watch in horror the assaults day after day by this government on the children of this province, I see my efforts and those I've worked with for my entire adult life

being swept away.

I left public school teaching in 1969 to run for the Toronto school board. We who were elected that year replaced 16 out of the 24 trustees with new trustees 30 or 40 years younger. I was one of those Young Turks. Now, nine elections later, I'm one of the old guard, but not in my enthusiastic interest in the needs of little children, and that's why I'm here today.

I object to the minister's stated intention to withdraw \$1 billion from the public schools of this province. I object to the minister's stated intention to impoverish the children of this province, to create a massive social deficit as he and his colleagues deal with the monster, in

their minds, of a budget deficit.

I object to the minister's attempts to criminalize school trustees of this province so that he can destroy a long and honourable part of local government in this province without public protest. I object to the minister's deliberate misrepresentation of school board spending with the ridiculous Ernst and Young study, which purports to show that for every dollar spent in the classroom, 80 cents is spent elsewhere, especially when the elsewhere list includes heat, light, translators, libraries, music, caretakers, principals etc; in other words, the very support systems that make classrooms function more equitably for all children.

As a trustee I have voted for these changes and improvements. I have voted for more parental involvement in the schools because I know children benefit from it. I've voted to feed children, to provide parent-child drop-ins, child care for student mothers so that they could stay in school. I've been wildly extravagant as I voted for AIDS education, arts education, anti-racist education.

I've topped the polls in the ward I represent nine times, a ward that includes Forest Hill, Rosedale, Moore Park, Deer Park, Wychwood Park, the Annex, Yorkville, the republic of Rathnelly. This must be the most politically active and prosperous part of Toronto. Since the government brought in Bill 103 and 104, I've attended, or will attend, 24 meetings in my constituency by highly incensed citizens worried about the usurpation of their local government. The ward I represent, Midtown, is also the area encompassing a large part of the ridings of Mrs Bassett and Mr Leach. Their constituents and mine are largely Tories and hugely furious. They and I want this government to give them back their local government, to have the civility to discuss the proposed changes at an appropriate speed and to listen carefully to what they have to say.

1600

Madam Chair, I am the mother of a — well, he's a boy as far as I'm concerned, but he's now 40 — and have three grandchildren. I have a very important stake in this society. I am extremely concerned about Bill 104 and what it is going to do to a very significant part of the structure of this province and about my ability as a duly elected person to respond to the needs of my constituents and the children in the ward I represent.

I would urge you to urge the government to withdraw Bill 104, to make sure they put forward a green paper or a white paper, that they make sure that paper is duly consulted around the province and that we start once again to build a proper education system in this province. I am extremely worried that a system that has served us well for 150 years, and in fact was the first form of government in Ontario, before city councils and before even the province existed, is going to be swept away under the cloud of what appears to be almost criminal activity as the minister paints us.

When I was here this morning, I heard a couple of things that made me smile. I moved the motion in 1972, 25 years ago, to get rid of the cars and drivers which were referred to this morning. When I became a trustee I took a 50% cut in pay, got no benefits and have nine times had a performance review more drastic than any in the private sector: You're either in or out. If I had been enticed by money, I would not have become a politician. As a kindergarten teacher, not only would I have had job security, by now I would have been retired on a secure pension. I do not now, nor have I ever, as board chair

even, had an executive assistant. As a trustee of a ward

of about 60,000 electors, I do my own constituency work.

I do have a part-time researcher who works with me. I

couldn't keep up with current information without him. I'm proud to be a school trustee. I think it's an honourable calling. I assume, having been elected nine times, I've served my constituents well. I know I've looked after the interests, and will continue to do so, of the children of this province, and I hope that everyone in this room is also committed to the interests of the children of this province. Thank you.

Applause.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, please; we don't want to infringe on Ms Nelson's time.

Thank you very much, Ms Nelson.

Mr Carroll: The previous government, of which Mr Wildman was a member of cabinet, commissioned the Sweeney commission to look at the whole idea of educational funding and governance, and it was chaired by a member of the previous government. They came back and they made some recommendations about school boards.

Mr Wildman: Then why did you ask —

Mr Carroll: Mr Wildman, I have the floor, thank you. You are coming before us today and suggesting now that we have a green paper to get some input and to study this issue. Is that because you don't like what Mr Sweeney, the Liberal, told the NDP, that now we as Conservatives are going to try to implement? Is that why you want us now to have a green — I don't understand why you're asking for more consultation.

Ms Nelson: Mr Carroll, I think Mr Sweeney was wrong. I think that making school boards as large as that will not only add to the expense of the administration of education — and the stated purpose of your party, as I understand it, is to obliterate administration — but it does seem to me that I was not just talking about the Sweeney report. I'm also talking about the Education Improvement Commission and its most amazing powers to overrule duly elected local government for a four-year period. It strikes me that that is not only draconian, it's also antidemocratic, and I have not talked to anyone in the

constituency I represent who thinks it's a necessary thing

or a good thing.

In the previous amalgamations of school boards under Mr Davis in 1966 or 1968, I think it was, there was a significant period of overlap, there was a lot of consultation, and I know it wasn't particularly well received because people get very attached to their local governments and their local representatives.

I think Mr Sweeney was dead wrong in proposing such huge boards, but he didn't have a lot of choice. His mandate was to reduce the number of boards by 50%. If his mandate had been different, perhaps his recommendations would have been different. I don't know.

Mr Carroll: Have I got time for another quick ques-

The Chair: If it's very quick.

Mr Carroll: The funding of junior kindergarten: A lot of people have talked about that. Do you think junior kindergarten, as one of 14 or 15 different years in school, should be funded differently from all the others? Do you believe that?

Ms Nelson: Yes, I think it should be funded more. If I had my way —

Mr Carroll: On what basis?

Ms Nelson: Well, I thought I explained that. In all these reports and dozens of others that I don't have the muscles to carry up here, they say that from conception on, we should be front-end-loading the system. If we do that, we produce better babies, we support families, we make sure children are ready to learn, we make sure they have the capacity to learn. We would drastically cut our costs in special education, remedial education, that sort of thing.

Mr Carroll: Does the Toronto board do that?

Ms Nelson: The Toronto board has had junior kindergartens for over 50 years and kindergartens for over 100 years, and child care in the schools for over 100 years and English as a second language for over 100 years.

Mrs Caplan: Mr Carroll, you'd be interested to know that I was in the first junior kindergarten class, just for your information. I was part of the pilot project.

Mrs McLeod: If the committee at any point becomes interested, I would be more than happy to discuss with the government members the significant differences between the School Board Reduction Task Force and what they have proposed, and I would also want to remind them that the consultation on that Sweeney report which you like to hold up was curtailed as one of the first actions of your government. All the public consultation was cut off on that report, so there was no opportunity to comment on it.

Fiona, I go back even further than you do, because I first ran in 1968. I ran as a trustee for the new amalgamated boards and worked to make those amalgamations effective because I believed they made sense for kids. I don't believe these amalgamations make sense for kids, and that's one of the reasons I am so distressed at the bill before us. Like you, I am not going to apologize for being very emotional about this bill because, like you, I see the efforts of school trustees for a long, long time being washed away by this and by what I believe to be other actions of the government.

One of the reasons being offered in defence of this bill — and I say "in defence of" this bill because it comes with a companion piece on the funding side — is that it will lead to equalized funding for students. Are you able to tell me in the few moments we have what you think this bill might do for equality of educational opportunity for children?

Ms Nelson: I don't have any doubt that if the government had intended to improve the funding for education, all they needed to do was raise the ceilings on the grants to the boards that qualify for grants. It's very clear that this legislation is not designed to improve the funding of education; it's designed to siphon off an enormous amount of money from education. It will ratchet everyone down to the same level perhaps and be terribly equal, but that is not equity, and it certainly is not going to serve the interests of this province in the long term if we actually want to have a well-prepared populace that will make us more prosperous in the future.

Mr Wildman: I would just parenthetically point out that the Sweeney commission was supposed to have continuing consultation and that was cut off, as my colleague indicated; and that he did not contemplate an Education Improvement Commission, with non-appealable powers; nor did he suggest that there should be a mandate for boards to contract out services.

Having said that, I'm most concerned to hear from you, as someone who has been interested in education for many years and has worked very hard in many aspects, particularly as a trustee, what you think of the new role of trustees under this proposed legislation. As you won't have the power to tax and you will be implementing decisions made by the ministry in terms of not just funding but curriculum and so on, what will be the role, as you see it, then, of a trustee who was elected?

Ms Nelson: The role under the proposed legislation is of a puppet, but I don't intend to have that legislation passed if I have anything to do with it.

Mr Wildman: Well, that's what we're about.

Ms Nelson: As far as I can see, there are some quite significant mistakes in this piece of legislation, and my hope is that these hearings will bring those mistakes to people's attention so the legislation can be remedied. I can't imagine, under the proposed legislation, why anyone would want to be a trustee. They wouldn't be able to do anything.

1610

When we found five babies in the washroom of one of our secondary schools a few years ago, we set together a work group on comprehensive care of children, and we started an infant child care centre so that our student mothers could stay in school and their babies have proper care and wouldn't be subject to abuse, and they would get counselling and the prenatal care they needed.

When AIDS first became a problem in the world, the city of Toronto board of health, on which I also sit, proposed to the city a budget of an \$11-million education fund, a lot of which would take place in the schools. This was at a time when North York wasn't admitting that AIDS existed in North York. I think there was some kind of impermeable curtain at Hogg's Hollow. I'm not sure.

The thing I'm trying to say is that we are able to act quickly because we aren't too big. A board, for example, that is going to represent the interests of 300,000 children is a behemoth. Like a brontosaurus, it's going to take ages to turn around. I'm not at all persuaded that bigger is better. Past a certain point, clearly there are tremendous diseconomies of scale and ability to act.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Nelson. You've spoken eloquently and passionately, as usual, and thank you for doing it on such short notice.

Ms Nelson: Thank you for letting me.

# ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES UNION

The Chair: Our next presenter is OPSEU, Local 595, Barry Weisleder. Welcome. Thank you for being here. You have 15 minutes, and if time permits, we will have some questions from the three caucuses.

Mr Barry Weisleder: Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee. My name is Barry Weisleder. I'm on the executive board of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, a union with nearly 100,000 members. I'm also president of Local 595, which represents over 1,000 substitute teachers, elementary and secondary school teachers, at the Toronto Board of Education.

My union, OPSEU, also represents substitute teachers at the Metro French school board, at the Brant County Board of Education, and we also represent clerical and professional staff at other public and separate school boards across Ontario.

I want to say at the outset that the Ontario Public Service Employees Union opposes Bill 104, just as we oppose Bill 103. This legislation, to us and to our members, is abhorrent. It constitutes a vicious assault on the quality of education, on the rights of workers, parents and students across this province.

After Bills 7 and 26, it was difficult to imagine legislation that could be more dictatorial, more abusive of the rights of Ontarians and more bloody-minded in its pursuit of the destruction of public services. Then along came 103, usurping locally elected bodies in Metro and imposing unwanted structures and new costs and responsibilities. But with Bill 104, the Conservative government has outdone itself again. It's called the Fewer School Boards Act, but a more accurate name would be "The Fewer School Boards, Fewer Teachers, Fewer Programs and Options for Students, Higher Taxes and Absolutely No Democracy, Turn out the Lights and Thank You Very Much Act of Ontario."

Michael Harrison, quoted in the press today, speaking on behalf of Mr Snobelen, our esteemed minister without secondary school graduation diploma, says the following: "We are introducing this legislation to redirect more resources into the classroom rather than wasting it on administration." This is an outstanding revelation from a government that has cut \$1 billion from education expenditures already, a government that is looking for another \$1 billion to cut, \$400,000 of which it will steal from school boards in Metro when it grabs the education portion of our property tax.

If this government is really interested in saving administration costs, I offer these suggestions:

First, abolish the Ontario College of Teachers. This is a make-work or make-mischief project if ever there was one. Under the cover of raising professional teaching standards, the real agenda of the College of Teachers is to intimidate teachers, place them in a legal double jeopardy, undermine teacher unions, charge fees with no future limit, kill forests of trees for self-serving paper products, and pay its administrators lavish salaries. That's the first suggestion.

Suggestion number two is to get rid of the body with the Orwellian name, the Education Improvement Commission, and the salaries of the commissioners and their hangers-on. Let the elected school boards do the job we the people put them there to do.

What about the reduction of school boards and the limitation of trustee salaries? Have you considered consultation? What about giving school boards an opportunity to merge voluntarily? We know of some that want to do that. A two-year deadline perhaps, with some modest goals, would make common sense, if you'll excuse the expression. A reduction in trustee salaries? Perhaps a reduction to match a reduction in cabinet ministers' salaries might be acceptable.

What the government of Ontario is doing makes no sense unless you are very rich and your company is looking for a piece of the education market. It's no surprise that Bill 104 gives the commissioners, who are paid \$90,000 a year to be elected by no one, the power to request tenders and to sell off and to privatize school services. Bill 104 is about privatization without even consultation through to the end of the year 2000. To that degree, it exceeds the pernicious nature of Bill 103. It's province-wide and it's longer in duration and in its usurpation of the elected local bodies.

Corporate intrusion in schools is already excessive. Corporate logos, co-op, cheap labour pools and Pepsi machines will soon be crowded out by corporate video messages in place of the morning announcements and corporate band uniforms and corporate sports equipment and corporate textbooks and corporate computer curriculum. Bill 104, with its \$5,000 cap on trustee salaries, ensures that when parents make an appointment to see the school trustee in the future, they'll be choosing between the trustee from McDonald's, the one sponsored by Nike or perhaps the one from Ernst and Young.

When this whole abomination breaks down from drastic underfunding, decline in education standards, the rise in violence and vandalism that neglect breeds, Tories hope that Ontario will finally be ready for charter schools or some kind of voucher system. Those who can afford extra fees can send their kids to a publicly supported private school that provides books, paper and learning tools. Those who can't afford those fees, and this will include the thousands who will lose employment thanks to Bills 103 and 104 and other bills that will strip labour successor rights and eliminate low teacher-pupil ratios in existing collective agreements, those unfortunates will have to be satisfied with the lower tier of schools, schools which none the less will charge user fees even for a child to eat in her school cafeteria on a cold day.

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Bill 104 is an abomination in a great variety of ways. One way is that it strips all school boards of their powers and supplants them with a non-elected body. Another is because it creates a monster in Metropolitan Toronto. Imagine a school board with 305,000 students and 550 schools. That's a population base larger than all the Atlantic provinces combined. In forcibly amalgamating all boards into one, you no doubt hope to set off a war between bargaining agents and to set off great anguish over which collective agreements will prevail in a given sector in the new, amalgamated school boards, including ours in Metro.

I can tell you that if the highest standards in employee wages and benefits do not prevail, you will indeed have a war. No wonder you've legislated that decisions of a commissioner cannot even be appealed to a court of law. How convenient the foresight. You are leading a descent into barbarism. How do you imagine that a school board as big as a Metro-wide school board will be able to serve its constituents, even to be reached by its constituents in any significant numbers? How will it even cope with basic staffing requirements that are often attuned to local needs, familiarity with the community and so on?

Let me give you a concrete example: I said at the outset that I represent 1,000 substitute teachers in Toronto, both in the elementary and secondary schools. Many of my members work or are familiar with and familiar to a family of schools, particularly in the elementary panel. We are dispatched to schools in three geographic areas in each panel, that's six dispatch zones, and when one list for elementary in zone A, for example, is depleted, they may borrow from the adjoining zone elementary list and so on in each of the panels appropriately.

Will the dispatching of substitute teachers become Metro-wide? Will someone who normally works in north Rexdale, in Etobicoke, in north Scarborough, in Agincourt, be expected to take an assignment at the Toronto Island school on short notice? Or will the dispatching continue in the same fashion and many other things continue in the same fashion and Bill 104 is just a shell game for robbery of hundreds of millions of dollars from taxpayers in Metropolitan Toronto and loss of democratic control over their school board and its policies to be determined by non-elected people appointed by somebody for several years? Or will this government replace trained professionals, like substitute teachers whom I represent or English-as-a-second-language teachers or continuing education teachers with volunteers or perhaps even with victims of workfare who are pressed into volunteer service?

Clearly, Bill 104 is part of a very large package. It's a large package of class legislation for a class war that's being waged by this government. The Paroian report, which is not far behind this train of legislation, seeks to take away the right to strike from teachers, even though the vast majority of negotiations result in settlements without strikes. But by targeting teachers' rights, stripping local school boards of their authority, reducing trustees to part-time agents of corporate sponsors, who is to stand up for students and for citizens in Ontario education?

The marginalization of opposition to cutbacks and to corporate intrusion and to education ministry dictatorship is what this package is really about. The corporate rulers of Ontario apparently can no longer afford the luxury of consultation, the luxury of democracy, certainly not the luxury of quality in education. Bill 104 makes plain what its predecessors, Bills 26, 7 etc, have shown all too clearly: It's war on the working people of Ontario, their kids, everybody. The government of Ontario has launched war on many fronts simultaneously, however, which Napoleon and Hitler learned doesn't always produce predicted or desired results.

But if it's war you want, it's war you'll get. The way to avoid it is not to amend this legislation — that's an impossible task — it's to withdraw it and to put your agenda to the people in an election where they can determine if what you set out to do, now that we know much of what it is, not all, is indeed what the people of Ontario want. When you have a mandate, then you have the right to proceed. When you proceed without a mandate and you destroy education and attack the rights of working people achieved over many decades of struggle, you invite a war. Thank you very much.

The Chair: We have three minutes, and I'd like you

to adhere strictly to them. It's the Liberals.

Mrs Caplan: I hear your passion. I agree with your concern. I'm also very concerned about the devaluing of the role of locally elected school trustees. I'd like your view, if you could, on who you think might be interested in taking the job, and given the size of the wards, even who could afford to do it and what you think the cost

might be. Have you given that any thought?

Mr Weisleder: I don't think we'd have to commission a report from Peat Marwick or Ernst and Young to find out who would be interested in the job of school trustee when it pays no more than \$5,000 a year. It would cost more than that to run for election in any ward, even in the new gigantic wards in the would-be district of Toronto school board. We're looking at corporate intrusion writ large, and that means that the companies that are interested in taking a piece of the education market are going to be setting the policies, with one proviso. Local school boards won't have much policymaking power any more, so perhaps it won't matter, but the eduction ministry has its ear attuned to what the power brokers on Bay Street want. They want this kind of legislation, and I'm afraid that's why we're getting it.

Mr Wildman: Just in relation to the issue of successor rights, this bill sets forward a tremendously quick agenda. There have been amalgamations in other jurisdictions where they've taken up to two to three years to implement them. We're talking about a matter of months, so a merging of collective agreements, many of which are quite different — different seniority lists and so on. Have you had any consultation with the ministry with regard to the issue of successor rights and how this process will

work?

Mr Weisleder: No, I haven't. What's more, I wrote to the ministry and asked for the opportunity to discuss this and to discuss the Paroian report because we weren't even invited or allowed to participate in a submission to Mr Paroian, who was looking at collective bargaining between school boards, or whatever they will be known as in the future, and teacher unions. There has been a dearth of consultation and what you'll have is a prescription for chaos.

Each of us who has fought in our bargaining agents and organizations for rights hold them dearly and we'll want to see them enforced. Even if the government is so arrogant as to take away successor rights, that doesn't preclude charter challenges and all kinds of procedures that will make lawyers wealthy and will cause chaos in school board bargaining. For a government that is even considering taking away the right to strike, to embark on this course is to invite a province-wide strike by teachers and many other education workers, and maybe that's exactly what they deserve.

Mr Skarica: You used words like "war" and "assault," those kinds of words, which I take as very serious words, but as I'm reading the act itself it indicates that the commission shall, in many cases — I'm just reading from one paragraph here — "consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations to the minister." How does that translate into war and attack on

working people?

Mr Weisleder: That might be in one particular area, but you know the commissioners have the authority to approve all budgets, to approve all appointments and to decide on — are actually encouraged to seek tenders and to set out to privatize, sell off, services that schools now provide as public services to the public. Doesn't that worry you?

Mr Skarica: That's the exact section I just read to you, the privatization section. I don't see anything draconian about it, and we're going to perhaps disagree, but it says "conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations." How is that an attack and a war

on working people?

Mr Weisleder: It's a furtherance of the agenda of privatization. I think that's quite clear. Even if the commissioners or the Education Improvement Commission — I can't get over that Orwellian name — didn't exist, the Ministry of Education and the other ministries of the government have shown their great liking for privatization. They wouldn't need recommendations in order to proceed. This will simply try to bolster their case and quicken the pace of it.

What is lacking or what is torn away in substance from local governance is the right of the local bodies elected by the people to say: "No, we don't agree. We won't have that. We'll seek the funding another way." That's what is taken away, and whether the commissioners recommend it or not, we know what the orientation of the government is. That's why we call for the removal of this legislation and for real consultations to break out.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Weisleder. Thank you, in particular, for being able to appear on this first day and still make a full submission.

Mr Weisleder: You're welcome and thanks for the

opportunity.

Mrs McLeod: For the record, another specific question comes from this presentation that merits response from the ministry. I believe that the question essentially was, if there are personnel who are not assigned specifically to

one school or to specific schools and are assigned on a daily basis, how will the decisions be made about assigning those staff in the very large boards? Perhaps if I can extrapolate, would there would be restrictions that say that staff can be required to take assignments only within the existing board boundaries?

Mr Skarica: I can look into that, but it seems to me from looking at the legislation it would appear that's one of the aspects the commission will be making recommen-

dations to the minister on.

Mrs McLeod: My frustration, and it is a legitimate frustration of a legislator, is that there is nothing in the bill that isn't subject to the recommendation of the education commission. Therefore, we have no idea, nor does anybody else, including members of the government, what the implications of this legislation are going to be. If we can't get some answers to the questions about how this legislation is going to be implemented, then how can we possibly know whether this legislation is good, bad or indifferent?

Mr Skarica: I give you the same answer, that there are a number of aspects that the commission is to look into and do research on. I would anticipate that and many other questions are areas that will be looked into to facilitate discussion and make recommendations to the minister on.

Mrs McLeod: So we can then anticipate a recommendation that the legislation will be withheld until all the

recommendations of the EIC are received?

**Mr Skarica:** No, I didn't say that. You asked me a specific question as to one area, as to personnel who aren't assigned to any particular high school, and I imagine that's something that there will be recommendations made to the minister on.

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Mrs McLeod: I just have never in my experience seen legislation brought forward when very specific questions about implementation could not be answered.

The Chair: I think you have your answer.

**Mr Wildman:** I have a specific question related to successor rights. I want to know if the provincial government will direct —

The Chair: It's very difficult to hear the question, please.

**Mr Wildman:** — the local boards and the Education Improvement Commission to respect successor rights in the merging of collective agreements.

The Chair: Did you want an answer from Mr Skarica

Mr Skarica: I don't have an answer for you right

Mr Wildman: Well, we need to know that, obviously. The Chair: Very well.

# TORONTO TEACHERS' FEDERATION

The Chair: The Toronto Teachers' Federation, Ms Gladstone. Welcome. Would you be so kind as to introduce your co-presenter and you have 15 minutes to do with as you wish.

Mrs Trynie de Vries: Mrs Trynie de Vries, president of the Women Teachers' Association of Toronto.

Frances Gladstone: I am here to state emphatically that Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, must be rescinded. The concepts that I will address today regarding this issue have already been stated repeatedly. However, I believe that it is important that I add my voice to the growing numbers who are expressing grave concerns with your plans for the educational system.

There are many flaws in your proposed bill, and among them is the way that you have chosen to combine boards of education. In the more rural areas of this province, you want to amalgamate boards that currently are manageable but which, if amalgamated, will cover enormous distances. This will create huge logistical problems for school staff, parents and students, who will have great difficulty attempting to organize meetings or work together in any meaningful way. I'm not knowledgeable enough about the workings of these geographically large but numerically small boards to present the issue in detail, but I'm certain that my colleagues who will be directly affected by your proposal will take the opportunity, if they can, to address the matter themselves. I can, however, address the proposal for amalgamation in Metro Toronto.

Before I go into details about the proposal for amalgamation of Metro boards of education, however, I would like to highlight one significant piece of information. Ralph Klein reduced the number of school boards in Alberta to 57. The population of Alberta is 2.5 million people. The population of Metro Toronto is also 2.5 million people. With amalgamation, there will be one school board to service the same number of people that 57 school boards service in Alberta.

The justification for this has yet to be made clear. From any viewpoint, economics, pedagogical, philosophical, organizational, it makes no sense to create so monstrous a board. If amalgamated, this board will be responsible for 310,000 students. It will also have to deal with 11,000 statutory members at the elementary level as well as a similar number at the secondary level. This accounts only for students and teachers. There will also be an enormous number of support, caretaking and maintenance staff, plus a vast bureaucracy.

Attempts to unify all the elements will be an organizational nightmare and chaos will reign for years to come. You cannot combine six boards of education whose culture, style, needs and practices differ greatly into one vast amalgamate. Each board currently has its own policies and procedures for everything from hiring and firing to curriculum development and introduction, staff management, professional development programs and all other matters that have to be dealt with on an ongoing basis. Whose methods will be used? Whose discarded? Who will decide? The implications are far-reaching and not easily resolved. Many years are required if anything at all is to be done, and it is not clear that anything needs to be done. The system functions well as it currently exists

One of the problems that will arise as a result of the size of an amalgamated board is that a vast bureaucracy will be required to run the system. Statistics have shown that larger systems cost more money to run than smaller ones. In addition, it will also be a far more impersonal

system, one in which parents, especially, will experience a great deal of frustration. As the boards now exist, there are trustees and superintendents in each family of schools readily accessible to parents who have questions or concerns. In a single board, with reduced employment, this accessibility will disappear. However, this is not to say that certain elements can't be jointly operated. But this requires time, good management and cooperation.

When Metro boards unified their purchasing departments, approximately two years was taken to ensure that the transformation would be a smooth one. Now, we have a unified purchasing system which has been cost-effective. The six boards have also negotiated centrally at both the elementary and secondary levels since the passage of Bill 127. Other areas in which we can develop a joint organization are being examined. But that is a far cry from amalgamation. You expect to have the entire six boards combined and smoothly functioning by January 1998. This is just not possible.

Additionally, this government proposes to remove local funding of education through property taxes and assume the cost provincially. The funding of education properly belongs where it is, at the local level, where locally elected trustees, who are accountable to the public, have the financial autonomy to determine how much money is required, how that money will be raised and how it will be spent. If amalgamation of the Metro boards takes place, clearly there will be no local levels as we now know them.

It is common knowledge that the education system is not broken in Ontario, but there is a strong belief that it will be if this government takes it over. Statistics clearly show the success of our schools. In 1993, Ontario secondary schools graduated 84% of their OAC students. Some 50% of these graduates went on to university and students who have graduated since 1989 are generally more literate than students who graduated before them. This does not sound like a broken system.

We do have high education costs in Ontario and for good reason, though they are far from the highest in the country. In an example of 63 North American jurisdictions, Ontario ranks in 46th place in cost-per-pupil spending. This despite the fact that there is in Ontario a huge percentage of immigrant children, as well as a far larger percentage of special needs students and socially disadvantaged families than elsewhere in the country. These factors account for much of our increased spending costs, especially in Metro. But in a democratic education system the needs of all children must be met, and this costs money, more money here in Ontario and especially in Metro Toronto than elsewhere. But less, not more, money is being provided, and there will be still less to the municipalities and the school system if this bill becomes law.

Part of the reason for a bill to amalgamate the boards of education is to enable you to take control of the funding so that you can make massive spending cuts—up to \$1 billion is the rumoured amount. Among other things, you needs these cuts to pay for the ill-advised income tax reduction you have promised. If you succeed in gaining control of funding for education and have the power to cut these funds, we know there will be a

tremendous reduction of services provided to students. The money, after all, will have to be found somewhere.

Your concept of "inside" and "outside" the classroom has made it clear where you plan to attack. Despite the fact that all services currently provided are necessary to the education of children, you have chosen to classify them in order to justify the reductions you will propose. By making it seem that money is being spent unnecessarily and that there are places where it is not required or where less might be better, you are attempting to sow the seeds of doubt — one more crisis being created that you will fix. But your efforts to persuade the public will fail here. You might believe your analysis of this situation, but others will not.

First, you will attempt to differentiate staffing because you do not understand the role or the value of well-trained professional teachers; nor do you value learning, though you claim to, especially in the earliest years. Despite study after study which show that children who begin school at age three cost governments far less over time because they become more productive adults, this government has made junior kindergarten, which begins at age four, optional. Now it wants to remove certified teachers from the program.

It also believes that teachers are not required in libraries, where they have long been curriculum partners, nor in guidance, where they provide much needed programs and counselling. This government also thinks principals and vice-principals need not be teachers. Such concepts show very clearly the lack of understanding of the role of school administration. School administrators do not just shuffle paper and money; they work with staff to develop programs, they provide leadership, they counsel teachers and students, and a host of other responsibilities which no person who has not taught could begin to fulfil.

Next, there will be a reduction or elimination of courses at both the elementary and secondary levels. English is one glaring example. As part of its reform of secondary education, this government plans to reduce the number of hours of English instruction as well as reduce time requirements in other subject areas. It's hard to conceive that a government that has claimed that our education system is not working believes its students would benefit from government's attempt to reduce the number of hours in a program that is at the very core of student learning.

Other students who will also suffer are those in special needs programs, which are costly to provide and will very likely be reduced in number. We expect this government will revise the qualification factors for these programs so that fewer children are deemed to have special needs. With less funding, we also anticipate the elimination or reduction of immersion French, ESL and heritage language programs, again by changing the parameters for qualification.

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Then there will be the elimination of adult education programs. This government thinks only in the short term. Advisers in the Ministry of Education and Training seem to be unaware of the fact that a better-trained, more highly skilled workforce is produced by providing educa-

tion to adults who did not, for a wide variety of reasons, access it earlier. We also know that education allows people to become better qualified for meaningful work. To propose that adults now pay for this opportunity is to prevent them from accessing it. They do not have the funds needed to pay for their courses.

There will also be large-scale reduction in much-needed support services. These include educational assistants. student support personnel and custodial maintenance people. Educational assistants provide invaluable help in the programs where they work. They perform a wide variety of tasks that are of great benefit to and much needed by students and teachers. Student support personnel, who include psycho-educational consultants, social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists, assess, evaluate and diagnose student needs that classroom teachers are not qualified to do. Without these people, we could not begin to address the problems these students present. Custodial and maintenance personnel clean, maintain and repair the schools. If their services are reduced, the buildings will quickly fall into disrepair, become shabby, dirty and unsafe, and outsourcing of these services would be more expensive and less efficient.

In addition, this government plans to greatly reduce the number of trustees and replace them by increasing parental responsibility — on a volunteer basis, of course — in the schools. While many parents have long taken an active role in their children's schools and are a strong, effective voice, most do not want greater responsibility. In any case, how many among them are available to do this job on any kind of regular basis? Most parents have neither the time nor the desire to take on this additional burden. It is one thing to have input into the programming and decision-making at the schools. It is quite another matter to be the deciding factor in running the schools.

You expect parents to make a commitment as unpaid workers to determining curriculum, handling the budget, hiring and firing staff, deciding values and ethics, and a host of other issues for which they have neither the training nor the desire to assume the responsibility. Further, the ability to participate fully in parent councils will be limited by economic, linguistic and cultural factors. This desire to strengthen the role of parents removes the universality and equity of the current system. It strikes as just another step on the way to this government's goal of privatizing a system as well as the step towards putting in place charter schools.

As well, this government plans to cut costs by eliminating or reducing the amount of preparation time available to teachers. Once again, this shows a clear lack of understanding on your part. In most occupations, as part of the regular course of the day, people do those things that they are required to do, whether it be telephoning, interacting with others, working at their desks or machines or wherever else they are required to be and do what they need to do. Teachers cannot fulfil any other part of their responsibilities when teaching. They must concentrate their attention on the children before them.

Therefore, in order to attend to the myriad tasks which they must also manage, they must have time free from teaching. Even when this time is provided, most teachers still spend several hours per day outside classroom time planning lessons, developing and organizing programs, contacting parents, meeting with their peers, marking papers and on and on. But besides the requirement of teachers for this time, there is also the fact that preparation time provides programs at the elementary level. Without prep time, some of these programs may be lost in the shuffle as they will all be taught by classroom teachers who are already overburdened. It may well be difficult for them to take on the additional burden of another program. Because of the existence of preparation time, these programs are currently provided, regularly and uniformly in each school, to the great advantage of the students.

But as much as anything else, we have grave concerns about the hidden meaning behind this bill. It is our fear that this government plans to privatize whatever possible, sell off assets and put much of the \$13-billion cost of education into corporate hands. Among the plans we believe you have are such things as selling off school buildings and leasing them back and selling off such services as transportation, maintenance and caretaking. Through these actions, we would expect to see the quality of service deteriorate and we would also expect to lose control of how our schools are run.

In the end, should you cut costs, whatever cuts are made, it is the children as well as the employees who will pay for them. The children will pay in larger class sizes, less individual attention, reduced programs and fewer needs met. If this government's agenda is followed at the secondary level, students will be less well equipped to take a leading role in society. This government plans to incorporate work experience into the secondary curriculum. Any work program must have a strong, curriculum-based component or students will become cheap labour for various businesses and will not be well educated in the process. With the main focus on technology, their learning will quickly become obsolete as it will be impossible for the schools to provide up-to-date equipment.

The goal to have Ontario students be well prepared to take their place in a global economy is a sound one. However, removing funding from secondary and adult education programs will undermine this goal and prevent its fulfilment. Further funding reductions will increase the negative effect already in evidence in the classroom. Statistics have shown that Ontario does not have the highest education costs in the country. It does have among the highest needs and cannot accommodate further per pupil reductions to funding.

The Chair: Ms Gladstone, I ask you to wrap up. You've exceeded your time.

Tou ve exceeded your time.

Frances Gladstone: I'm just about finished.

What we are asking is that you re-examine the concepts you have put forward in Bill 104 and reconsider its passage. Our school system functions well as it currently exists. There is no need to amalgamate the six Metro school boards. This bill is not about greater efficiency or cost saving. Amalgamation of school boards will not improve the quality of education. What this bill is about is to give this government control of education funding. We believe it is your intention to remove money from the system, privatize education and put the increased funds

into the hands of the corporate structure. The corporations are dictating this government's moves, and in education and other areas, you are following instructions well.

Our request to you is to make the only rational decision possible, which is to shelve Bill 104 and leave the structure of the education system as it is. Leave education funding at the local level, keep per pupil funding at the amount presently set and retain your current responsibility for social services. Nothing in this system is broken and there is nothing that you need to fix.

The Chair: I regret that we don't have time to ask questions, but thank you very much for your presentation

here today.

# CONFEDERATION OF RESIDENT AND RATEPAYER ASSOCIATIONS

The Chair: I ask the Confederation of Resident and Ratepayer Associations to come forward. Mr Vallance, welcome. Thank you very much for coming in today. You have 15 minutes.

Mr David Vallance: Well, I'll give you a chance to

catch up. It's a short one.

The Chair: If time permits, then, we'll ask you some

questions, if you don't mind.

Mr Vallance: My name is David Vallance. I'm here from the Confederation of Resident and Ratepayer Associations but I come from a business organization rather than a residents' group myself, because we're also ratepayers. My remarks are directed at the broad strokes of the bill rather than the detail because I haven't had time to take a really close look at it; it's more on the concept than the substance.

This government has taken a curious turn. In an all-out effort to give a tax reduction to high-income people who repeatedly say this is less important than reducing the deficit, the Harris government has cut welfare payments, reduced its own numbers by reducing the number of MPPs, or at least it will, and is now proposing to reduce the number and role of school boards in the province.

Like a lot of the proposals from the Harris government, this seems to be a good way to save money. Maybe, but many corporations that did similar things are finding out that it doesn't necessarily work out the way that common

sense said it would.

The Economist magazine, the January 4, 1997, issue, in an article on large corporate mergers says management thinkers who "urged bosses to re-engineer, downsize and thin out their management ranks....have left those top executives still more isolated from what goes on in their firms. Managers of the business units, who are rarely at the table when a takeover is negotiated, are now even further removed from strategic decisions. Yet it is these poor 'demoralized souls' who are expected to put into practice a firm's post-merger 'integration strategy.' So the destruction of much of a merger's potential value takes place out of sight of the bosses who championed it."

Incidentally, the article also states that 57% of large corporate mergers after three years lost value, and over

the longer term even more lost value.

The same article also states: "What seems to link most mergers that fail is the acquirer's obsession with the deal

itself, coupled with too little attention to what happens next, particularly the complex business of blending all the systems, informal processes and cultures that make things tick. In the 1980s, this 'soft stuff' often did not matter. Anybody could make a merger pay off if enough jobs and capacity were cut. But now most of those surplus workers and factories are gone. 'Top managers often don't value the qualities of the firm they are buying,' says Rosabeth Moss Kanter of Harvard Business School. As a result they destroy much of the existing value."

I think the previous presentation spoke to that aspect. This bill seems to contain too much obsession with the deal but provides too little detail to show that there has been enough attention paid to what happens next.

The reduction in the number of trustees and the dramatic capping of their remuneration at \$5,000 has an appeal to those who think all who are elected are useless. Does that thinking exclude MPPs? What does the reduction in the number of trustees accomplish? Have they been performing a useful role up to this time? Five thousand dollars may make sense in North Bay, but has it any meaning in Toronto, Ottawa or London? Will trustees be elected or appointed? If trustees represent a much larger area, they will be very remote from both the taxpayer and the parent in these cities. Will anyone even want the job, and I believe it is a job, not a volunteer position, for \$5,000?

Is the government paying attention to what happens next, particularly the complex business of blending all the systems, informal processes and cultures that make things

tick?

How do parent councils square with community standards? Will each school have its own standards, possibly set by a small clique of parents who dominate the parents' council? There is some indication that non-classroom costs include the principal, heating of the school and school maintenance, libraries and phys ed teachers. Are the Premier, the operation and maintenance of the legislature building and its research resources not part of the cost of maintaining a government? Will the age and quality of the buildings be taken into consideration when allocating funds for non-classroom costs? More important, will the need for special requirements be taken into account when dealing with the areas that have high populations of immigrant and refugee children with very different cultural backgrounds?

There are some areas where a common curriculum and centralized purchasing process could be valuable for saving money. The thrust, however, does not seem to be to create efficiencies; rather it focuses on getting rid of

politicians as if this magically creates savings.

The appointment of an Education Improvement Commission, with salaries of \$90,000 a year, to figure out how to get there from here indicates that the acquirer's obsession with the deal itself, coupled with too little attention to what happens next, is what is going on here.

One area that has been open to criticism in the past is the promotion of teachers to administrative posts. Does a teacher make a good manager of transportation, of school construction, of maintenance operations? I have some reluctance in introducing references to the Economist to a government that seems to want to operate by the seat of its pants and common sense. All too often the studies show that the intuitive solution to a problem is not the best. I also have great concern that a lot of what has been proposed here appears to be that of a centralizing, dare I say it, socialist regime. The lack of any detail to so many questions indicates that the final comment from the Economist item on the Harris government in the January 25, 1997, issue, may be prophetic. It says: "The changes on the way are less of a revolution than a whirligig. Whirligigs have a way of spinning out of control and even of savaging the man in charge."

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much. I found your presentation refreshing and thought-provoking and it raises a lot of questions. I really wonder, representing ratepayers as you do, whether you think the time frame for implementation of Bill 104 is adequate to ensure that all stakeholders, if you want to use that term — students, parents, teachers, trustees, ratepayers — will have an opportunity to have an influence over how these changes are implemented or whether there will be chaos, as has been suggested by some of the other presenters, simply because of the short time frame between now and January 1.

Mr Vallance: That's a very interesting question. I was called on Friday to ask whether I wanted to present today or tomorrow, and I chose today because tomorrow's no better for me. This is a short presentation because I haven't really had much time to study the bill or the

whole thing behind it.

I think the result will be chaos because, as the document says, there's too little attention paid to the detail of merging all the things that go on in the background that aren't properly understood, the same as in a corporate merger. The difference between this and a corporate merger is that in a corporate merger usually there's an incentive to make a profit, whereas here you've got a culture that's largely a bureaucratic one and the mindset is quite different, in my opinion.

To answer your question, I think the way to get there is the old saying, "Make haste slowly," and "Evolution, not revolution, produces a far better result." I think what we've got here is a revolution, and it's not going to work in the long run. That's my opinion, so that's what I'm

trying to say.

Mr Carroll: Thank you very much, sir. There's a question I asked a group this morning and I'd like to ask it of you. Statistics released by OSSTF — in American funds, coincidentally; I'm not sure why they did that — as have been quoted, show that we are 46th out of 63 jurisdictions in per pupil spending and we are US\$950 per student higher funding in Ontario than in Alberta. Despite that fact, Alberta does dramatically better than us in all international and national standard testing. Does that concern you?

Mr Vallance: Certainly it concerns me, but I think the previous presentation, with 53 school boards in Alberta, which has the same population as the city of Toronto, says something about that. What my document is saying is that there are efficiencies and there are ways to save money in the system. My perception of what's going on

here is that you're obsessed with the deal itself rather than the nitty-gritty of actually creating those savings.

Mr Carroll: Last year we passed along to the school boards of the province of Ontario a 1.8% decrease in their funding, and the way they handled that is that 70 of the boards went out and raised taxes instead of finding efficiencies. How would you suggest we find the efficiencies if the school boards won't do it?

Mr Vallance: To me, that's something the same as your cutting of welfare payments. You've passed on your role, as I see it, of creating efficiencies to the recipient, who may be ill equipped to deal with that. Perhaps the efficiencies should be created by showing them how to do the efficiencies and create the savings rather than just saying: "We're going to cut your funding. Save money." If you're operating on a budget and somebody cuts your payments, you've got a drastic reaction to take. As an individual perhaps you can do that, but when you've got perhaps thousands of people involved, it's a far more difficult process, particularly when there are unions and federations of teachers involved that are into a locked-in contract or whatever. I don't think it's as simple as that.

Mr Carroll: There are a lot of examples of efficiencies out there.

**Mr Wildman:** On a point of order, Chair: I can't let this pass. It's in Hansard in the House that Mr Peter Wright of the Ministry of Education and Training has said that the cuts were not 1.8%; they were 5.6% last year.

The Chair: Thank you, but that's not a point of order. Mrs McLeod.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate the time you put into appearing today and making your presentation and also what I believe are very legitimate questions you raise about a process of carrying out change in a way that would be successful.

I don't think you need to feel apologetic about not having had time to read the act in detail, because one of the concerns with the act is that most of the recommendations about implementation are left to a commission to be put in place and bring forward those recommendations after the act is actually passed. That's one of our basic problems, in all honesty: not being able to get at the details and get answers to those questions. I hope some of the issues you've raised will be ones which the government will take seriously.

I'm not sure if it's fair to ask you to comment on a companion piece to the bill, which is part of what the minister introduced in introducing the bill, and that's the intention to take education funding off the residential tax. There are two aspects of it which concern many of us and might concern the ratepayers' group or the business group, whichever part of the hat you wish to wear. One is that all the evidence now is that there is a significant additional offload on to the property tax base as a result of the tradeoff for taking education off the residential tax. The second is that business continues to pay a commercial tax for education, so they have to bear not only their continued tax for education but their share of the offload on to the municipal tax base. I don't know whether your organization has had a chance to look at that issue yet.

Mr Vallance: If you have half an hour I could give you an answer. Yes, we've looked at that. My concern on the property tax side is very complex and I don't want to go into it right now. But to trade off school funding for the other costs seems, as I said in my document, to be obsessed with the deal rather than the nitty-gritty of how it works. Really, there's no advantage from the property taxpayers' point of view to doing this, and if it's going to create total havoc, which it will — I'm quite convinced it will; I've seen corporate mergers and I've been involved at the bottom end of it, I haven't been involved with the actual merger, and seen what happens in head offices and so on when you do this kind of thing — there will be chaos.

If guess, perversely, I'm sort of hoping some of this stuff will go ahead because this government is going to look so stupid in about two years, so incompetent, that all its good ratings now will start to disappear as people realize that the management aspect of its proposals, many of which have some common sense and are probably necessary in the long run for the province, is not being

dealt with. There's no attention to detail.

Supporters of the government, many of whom are in our body, our group, are frustrated that they're creating a situation whereby they look okay still because, as the figures say, if somebody says to me, "Do you support the government?" I say I support the general thrust of what they're doing, yes. But will I vote for them again? Not a damn chance. That's really I guess because of the chaos you're talking about that's going to occur because of this. Trading one for another that gives you no benefit does not make any sense to us. That's really what we're saying.

The Chair: Mr Vallance, thank you very much for coming in today and presenting, again on such short notice. The committee is very appreciative.

Mr Carroll: On a point of privilege, Madam Chair: I want to correct the record on the quote I made about the 1.8% reduction in funding vis-à-vis Mr Wildman's comments about 5.8%, The 1.8% is the amount that the overall budgets of school boards was reduced as a result of our funding cuts; the 5.8% is a different number that relates to a different thing.

Mr Wildman: It relates to the grants, which is what

Mrs McLeod: If the record is to be corrected, the suggestion of Mr Carroll was that boards should have been able to cope with a 1.8% cut in their funding without resorting to cuts to the classroom. In fact the cuts that have directly affected boards that were dependent on grants were considerably in excess of the 1.8% and in some cases exceeded 15%.

The Chair: As you know, Mrs McLeod, only Mr Carroll can correct his own record and he has done just that

# WARDS 11/12 EDUCATION COUNCIL, TORONTO BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: We'll move to the next presenter, Wards 11/12 Education Council, Mr Peter Clutterbuck. Welcome to the committee.

Mr Peter Clutterbuck: Thank you very much, Madam Chairperson and members of the committee. I think you have a copy of my presentation, about seven pages. I've attached to it something I'll be referring to in the first few paragraphs, a concrete example of a parent-driven process in our wards around the impact of budget cuts in our schools even before the more recent ones, a concrete product of parents working together with local trustees to gather information, analyse it and produce it in a form which we submitted to Minister Snobelen. I wanted to make sure you have that, and one of the reasons is we talked about that here last year.

Last May I was pleased to appear before this standing committee on behalf of the Wards 11/12 Education Council to present at that time our concerns about Bill 34. Wards 11/12 Education Council represents 13 primary public schools and one secondary public school in a section of the city of Toronto, schools with a total enrolment of more than 5,000 children. Our education council is led primarily by parents from each of the schools in the wards but also includes the involvement of teachers and principals and our two school trustees. I myself have a 14-year-old daughter in the eighth grade at Winona Drive Senior Public School.

We take our responsibilities in wards 11/12 seriously. as I explained to the standing committee last spring. We were concerned then about the implications of the proposed cuts in education financing for the quality of our children's schooling and we decided to do our own impact study of budget cuts in our schools via a school survey on changes in class sizes, the amount of help teachers have in the classroom and the status of specialty learning programs which our parents value and our children need. I reported preliminary findings to the standing committee on May 6 last year. We did a more complete survey, thanks to the help of our local trustees and other officials with the school system, in the fall of 1996 and presented Minister of Education Snobelen and our two MPPs. Mr Derwyn Shea and Mr Tony Silipo, with our final results, including summary discussions from parent and teacher meetings in 11 of our schools. That's what you have there.

Since most proposed government legislation today seems to lack any consideration of community impact, I have attached a copy of our final report. In doing so, I make my first point on the matter at hand, Bill 104, and the process for public comment on Bill 104, and that is, even if legislation like this is fast-tracked with insufficient time for public hearings, community people, and parents in particular, are asking the right questions and are beginning to collect their own answers and to gather together in order to share their concerns about the direction that this government is taking the education system.

Since last fall, we in wards 11 and 12 alone have had more than 30 parent meetings on the proposed changes to the education system. Even before Bill 104, we started. Parent concern is mounting as we meet two or three times weekly with more and more parents in our own 14 schools, and I'm going to another parent meeting tonight, and we begin to share our findings with parents in other parts of Toronto and Ontario.

The standing committee should extend its sessions to hear from all who wish to make a statement on the critical issue of the future governance of the school system in this province, because parents are asking these questions, are sharing information and need a chance, as well as teachers and others involved in the school system, to make their input.

More specifically with respect to Bill 104, first, Bill 104 will give us bad school governance. The Ontario government's operating premise in most policy areas is that government's role should be reduced to the absolute minimum. The very title of Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, asserts the government's bias. Less is more for this government when it comes to any public governance function.

The government's message to the wider community is that our schools are overgoverned with top-heavy adminstration. The Minister of Education misleads citizens by claiming almost half of education funding does not serve the child in the classroom. When we in wards 11 and 12 investigated that charge, we found it to be totally false. In the Toronto school board, the entire central administration accounts for only 5% of the total board budget. The rest of the Toronto budget goes into the schools where our children spend their school day in classes and a variety of other learning settings and situations. Some of that help comes into the schools from the central board in terms of resource people. We consider that an important service and support for our children in their classes.

It is these misleading public statements by the minister and government officials which foster support for getting rid of "unnecessary governance and bureaucracy." What does the government propose by way of an alternative but a much more massive and unresponsive bureaucracy? If Bill 104 comes into law, it will merge six school boards and the Metro Board into the largest single school board in Canada. The new Toronto district school board will be responsible for 300,000 students, which as someone has already pointed out, is slightly less than the total number of students in the province of Alberta, which has about 50 school boards.

What is the rationale for good and effective governance upon which this is based? We are sceptical of the government's interest in effective governance at all. Rather, we believe this change is primarily intended to wrest control of governance in education from the local level and to centralize authority and power in the same way that the proposed changes in financing education by removing it from the local property tax will do.

Bill 104 reduces democratic access and accountability. Essentially, Bill 104 eliminates any useful role or expectation of the school trustee. First of all, it increases by 350% the ratio of students to each trustee in the redrawn ward areas. In Metro, a trustee's representative responsibilities will rise from about 4,000 to 14,000 students. The new Toronto district school board will become the biggest board in Canada, with the worst student-trustee ratio in Canada.

Second, Bill 104 allows district school boards to set a trustee's salary, so-called, up to \$5,000 annually. This is absolutely ridiculous in the 1990s. Actually, this provision shows a complete disdain for the community's

choice by democratic election of people to represent their children's interests and the public interest in a quality school system. Clearly, no one will be able to dedicate their full-time occupation to the role of school trustee unless they have other means of livelihood, which in itself could open up conflicts of interest. The \$5,000 trustee salary cap is one of the clearest signs that the government does not value the democratic foundation of our education system.

At the community level, we in wards 11 and 12 know the difference between good, accessible service from our elected trustees and what Bill 104 promises to give us. Our experience in wards 11 and 12 is that our trustees are always with us when we need them, which could be any time of the day, evening or weekend, for telephone calls or meetings. They assist the education council with the preparation and communications on policy and program issues to the larger parent community. They hear our concerns and carry our policy recommendations to the school board. We just do not believe that more than tripling the trustee's jurisdiction while turning the function into a less-than-part-time hobby with lunch money is going to maintain that level of service and accountability.

We can only conclude that this is exactly what the government intends — to minimize, if not eliminate, the district school board's accountability to parents and the community in any meaningful way by emasculating the role and function of the elected school trustee.

Bill 104 offers the illusion of parent participation for most and the mechanism for charter school development for others. The government's promise of legislated community advisory councils in each school will of course assure parent involvement. This is a charade. Not only does Bill 104 void the role of the trustee to all intents and purposes, it expects parents to assume greater direct responsibility for their own school's operations without the policy guidance of a full-time, properly compensated trustee nor other administrative supports. Further, this very expectation of advisory councils evokes the notion of the little red school house, the one-room school house, rather than any sense of our schools as part of a complex urban system, at least here in Toronto and Metro.

It is more than likely that the level of budget reductions to Toronto schools will be such that these community advisory councils will become community fund-raising vehicles for the schools to try to maintain even minimum standards of basic education. Doubtless some of these councils in more privileged communities will take advantage of their independence and greater means to apply to the province for charter school status. This will only further erode our public education system.

Bill 104 sets up the Education Improvement Commission as a final affront to democracy. The most remarkable and outrageous provision in Bill 104 is the establishment of the provincially appointed Education Improvement Commission. In effect, the EIC makes the Fewer School Boards Act into the No School Board Act. Its powers supersede the decision-making of all current duly-elected school boards in Ontario for 1997 and effectively places them under trusteeship. Even appeals to the court on EIC

decisions are precluded. In fact, the threat of penalty to individuals and boards which resist or obstruct the EIC is clear. Similar anti-democratic language to intimidate opposition to the government's proposed action can be found in Bill 103.

While the specific powers given to the EIC in Bill 104 concentrate on the transition year of 1997, the EIC's mandate extends for four years. Why, we ask, is it necessary for this transition authority to exist for that long? It is our deep suspicion that its powers will be that, in effect, even the new elected district school boards will not be really governing our education system. We expect that the EIC's powers to dispose of school assets paid for in Toronto by the local property taxpayer—perhaps sell them off to private interests and lease them back—to privatize and outsource school services and new building construction and to approve school budgets, all will be extended beyond any arguably reasonable transition period.

All of this concerns us in wards 11 and 12. We are particularly wary of the use of the EIC to control and reduce school budgets. We believe that this government is firmly committed to fulfilling its unwise tax cut promise by saving money in the education system. This so-called saving will come at a cost to our children's education. Government statements indicate that Toronto schools can expect upwards of \$2,000 less per pupil. In our communities we are calculating the impact of that level of reduction. On a school-by-school basis we are talking with parents about the real cost of this cut in terms of drastically rising class sizes; losing teachers and teachers' aides: leaving the remaining teachers in toolarge classes with complex needs and not enough help; dropping programs parents and students value and need such as music, art, physical education, special education,

We can see the EIC being the government's agent for undermining the quality of our school system over the next few years with an extension of its powers to control budgets and to override the decision-making authority of elected school boards, as few as they might be. We note that the EIC, while above the law with respect to local citizens, is accountable itself to only one authority: the Minister of Education.

language training etc.

Bill 104 destroys local governance and a tradition of democratic accountability in our education system. The Ontario government is on a mission. That mission involves the removal of government from the lives of Ontario citizens. The Ontario government does not believe in a meaningful and positive role for government in the creation of the kind of society which we all want for ourselves and our families.

It is up to the citizens of this province to decide whether they too have a similar minimalist view of the role of government in our lives. But our avenues for so expressing our collective interest in making public bodies work more effectively for us are now being cut off by government action on a number of fronts, which shuts down democratic participation.

Bill 104, much like other government initiatives, is not just about creating simpler governance structures and it is

not even just anti-government. It is anti-democratic as well, and in the case of Toronto it is assaulting a democratic local decision-making tradition that is almost as old as responsible government itself in this province. We suggest that you not pass and you not put forward the Fewer School Boards Act.

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): Thank you, Mr Clutterbuck. Can you tell us how many parents participate on the education council at your school?

Mr Clutterbuck: Yes, we have at least two people from each of the parent associations who come to our education council meetings, usually a first representative and a backup, second representative. We have 14 schools and that's about 28 parents. In any particular meeting of the education council, we might get 15 or 16 out, but we hold general parent meetings monthly or every other month where we get 150, 200 parents out, depending on the time and the weather and things like that.

Mr Pettit: What advice could you give us that would

achieve increased parental involvement?

Mr Clutterbuck: We really have found that communication is important for parents and getting them the message that meetings are happening, helping them frame the issues and encouraging them to come out, even doing telephone trees which parents participate in. All that requires a commitment from your local trustee, first of all, with a manageable number of schools in the ward, and secondly, other school officials, including some teachers and principals but people at the central office as well, who help set up telephone trees, help guide parents in how to actually participate in meetings. The Winona Parents' Association nominated a totally new parent to become a chair of the committee. She needed some training and instruction and we got that from the school board in terms of how to participate as a chair.

Mrs Caplan: I too want to follow along and talk about the experience you've had in your community getting involvement of people who have difficulty either because of language or socioeconomic — how many of your active participants who have gone through this kind of community development come from the groups I've

described?

Mr Clutterbuck: At every meeting we have, especially of the larger parent meetings in schools, we always have people there as translators. Most of the presentations are in English, sometimes in other languages like Portuguese and Spanish but mostly in English, and we always have through the school board arranged translators who in little different sections of the audience help people actually understand. Every single meeting we have you always hear a hum in the audience because people are getting the message in their own language.

Mrs Caplan: Those would all be considered expenses of the school board that would not directly be classroom

expenses?

Mr Clutterbuck: I guess this government would not consider them classroom expenses. We consider them getting parents the information they need in the language they need and that affects their kid in the classroom.

**Mr Wildman:** Thank you, Mr Clutterbuck. I very much enjoyed your presentation, as I did the presentation last May, and I appreciate the additional information

you've given us. I want to ask just one question. One of the arguments that has been put forward by the government to justify having fewer boards, fewer trustees and lower pay for trustees as it relates to Toronto is that they want to encourage the local school councils to become more active and involved in the operation of the schools. As a parent who is very interested and involved in your own schools in your area, do you support that thrust of the government as a way of justifying Bill 104?

**Mr Clutterbuck:** I support getting parents more involved in the schools, for sure. I think Bill 104 takes away the kind of infrastructure which now makes that possible. What the bill proposes is counterproductive to

what the government wants.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Clutterbuck, for appearing before us today and making your presentation.

## BEV BUXTON

The Chair: Ms Bev Buxton. Ms Buxton has been waiting virtually the entire day to appear before us. We thank you for taking the spot that is available this afternoon. You know the rules by now; you've been here all day.

Ms Bev Buxton: My name is Bev Buxton. I am a parent. I don't represent a formal group. As you now know, I didn't know I was going to have a chance to speak until a few hours ago. Nevertheless, as ill prepared as I am and as unfamiliar as I am with this kind of proceeding, I'm very grateful for this opportunity to speak and I'm happy to help to ensure that as few such opportunities as possible are wasted in the 20 hours we have to speak about this.

As this is a day to hear from umbrella groups, I've chosen my group. I'm going to represent my children and their friends and their friends' friends and all of the hundreds of thousands of children in this province who are the ones with the smallest voices and who have the most to lose if this bill is passed.

As you don't know me, I'll give you some of my credentials to speak here today. First of all, I'm a citizen of Ontario and I have an education. I have an Ontario secondary school honours graduation diploma, a BA from the University of Toronto and an MA from Queen's University in Kingston. I have attended public schools in Germany, in Quebec, in Australia and here in Ontario. I have spent more than a decade editing and writing educational materials for Canadian students. In short, I have a wide experience of and a strong commitment to education

Mr Snobelen, in his opening statement about Bill 104 this morning, talked quite a bit about the importance of accountability to the general populace — I include myself — about the need for a greater efficiency in the administration of the education system and about the importance of a world-class education for Ontario students. I don't suppose anyone here would challenge the importance of any of those issues, but I will challenge the notion that these issues are sufficiently addressed by Bill 104.

First I want to talk about accountability. Having listened today, I know that many speakers have addressed

this issue. In particular, the point has been made that amalgamating school boards and reducing the number and the power of school trustees will make the system less accountable at a local level.

I also think it's very significant that, as Mr Snobelen says, Bill 104 is the first of a number of bills relevant to the reform of education. In this first bill the minister proposes to change radically the structure of the education system. He proposes that we reduce to the point of virtual oblivion the powers previously held by trustees and school boards and he proposes granting those powers to an appointed commission that reports to him.

Here's the main point: He asked that this bill be passed before he tells us, the general populace, to whom he says he wants to be more accountable, just precisely how those

incredible powers are going to be used.

The fact that this is the first education bill demonstrates a severe lack of accountability, in my view. To be accountable to me, the government needs to provide some very basic facts and information. I want to know why the Education Improvement Commission needs to be set above the law. I want to know why there is no public disclosure of the amounts of the per pupil grants or at the very least what formula would be used to calculate these. I want to know what specific criteria would be used for determining that formula. I especially want to know how those criteria for the formula relate to the government's values and priorities for my children's education.

This government, while saying that accountability is important to it, is proposing a bill that is paternalistic and authoritarian. It wants unquestionable power over education policy and funding first. Then it will either divulge its plans or possible simply put them into action. I submit that the government, to give credibility to its commitment to accountability, should withdraw this bill until it discloses the full mandate that it will certainly give to the Education Improvement Commission and allow public

feedback on that.

For the reasons I've stated, I don't believe that the motivation for Bill 104 is to make the education system more accountable, nor do I believe that efficiency of administration is the motivator. Let's admit for the sake of argument that the board system allows inefficiencies. Well, who's surprised? Let's even go so far as to suggest that external pressure from the government is required to convince boards to relax their hold on territory and cooperate in ways that would allow a more efficient delivery of services.

It has been pointed out several times today that the radical restructuring proposed in Bill 104 would save about \$150 million. Surely, it makes more sense to work within the existing system to find new efficiencies instead of risking the loss of so much that is good in the system as it exists. If only \$150 million is to be gained, it stands to my reason at least that the board system is not as grossly inefficient as Mr Snobelen would have us believe.

Finally, and most importantly to me, I cannot believe that the motivation for Bill 104 is the improvement of the quality of my children's education. If that was really the motivation, when I read that bill and when I read some of the statements from this government, I would have to come to the conclusion that the government thinks (1) our system is grossly, even culpably wasteful; (2) our chil-

dren are getting a really bad education; (3) the system operates with almost complete disregard for parents' opinions; (4) present decision-makers within the education system are at best incompetent; and (5) the entire system is so wasteful, so moribund, so unresponsive and so unfit to educate our young that the only solution is to dismantle the entire system and make the government itself responsible for it.

First of all, although the system is very imperfect, as most systems are, it is a good system. It's a system that nurtures good citizens, thoughtful decision-makers, responsible and well-informed adults and creative thinkers. It fosters respect and understanding of others and it provides students with those basic skills we hear so much about. It is a system to be improved. It is not a system that's so decrepit that it needs a complete rebuilding.

The government obviously disagrees with me, but even supposing it is right about the condition of our education system and I'm wrong, Bill 104 does not show evidence that it is motivated by the need to improve the quality of education. A government setting out to improve the quality of education in this radical way, as far as I'm concerned, has the responsibility to delineate with the utmost clarity and conviction its vision of a good education and of a well-educated citizen. They have the responsibility to show us the concrete objectives that flow from that vision, objectives they must meet in order to achieve that vision. It is simply not enough to ask us to trust them to do a better job than the last guys, especially since that means pulling down a system that works and that has taken years to build.

It's trust; that's what it really comes down to. Mr Snobelen is demanding that we trust him blindly, as he and his appointed Education Improvement Commission take over our education system. I'm not a parliamentarian. It looks like he has the right to make this demand. I am a citizen with a strong belief in democracy and I don't believe it's right for him to make this demand. I think it's an abuse of power. Am I wrong? It's entirely

possible, of course.

Luckily, I don't have the power to demand that you all trust me. I would ask, however, that each MPP ask himself or herself a few questions before voting yes to Bill 104. These are my questions: Is it responsible for a government simply to ask for trust when proposing such fundamental change? Is it a good thing for any government in a democracy to feel it has the right to that kind of power? Do MPPs deserve that kind of power? Do the citizens of Ontario willingly and consciously confer that kind of power when they elect a government?

I urge you to withdraw Bill 104 until the necessary trust you need is rightfully earned. That trust can be earned through fair disclosure of information, through conscientious consideration of opposing points of view and through the articulation and dissemination of both a vision for education, not the province's fiscal health, and

a plan that flows clearly from that vision.

Mrs McLeod: I'll ask you one question in one area, but I also want to take some of our time to place some of the questions you've asked of the government in your presentation as questions that require an answer from the ministry. Some of the questions you've raised may be debatable ones, particularly in the last few moments of

your presentation, but some were also very specific. They constitute information which should be made available to the public. I would like, Madam Chair, to come back and place those questions either at the end of my time or at the end of this presentation.

The question I'd like to explore with you a little bit picks up on — and thank you for your presentation. It was a very thorough one, although done, I know, with not much notice for preparation time. You did touch on the fact that you've done considerable education writing, I assume perhaps in the curriculum area. I want to bring to your attention that one of the areas of saving that the ministry sets out when they look for \$150 million of a \$14-billion budget as their savings from this amalgamation is in what's called educational support. Essentially, they are the people who provide support for curriculum development within the school boards.

There are frequent references made to the School Board Reduction Task Force report done under John Sweeney's leadership, and one of the things that report says very clearly is that if there are going to be fewer school boards, there also has to be more responsibility for the Ministry of Education, particularly in the area of curriculum development. I'm not sure if you feel that's an area that you could comment on, but do you see there being efficiencies to be achieved in this whole process that will lead to better curriculum for kids?

**Ms Buxton:** My area has actually been the writing of textbooks rather than in developing curriculum, so I'm not entirely familiar with how that works. I'm probably not really able to address that question.

Mrs McLeod: That's fair enough.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs McLeod: Chair, I'll come back at the end to place the questions.

The Chair: Yes, that would be fine.

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much for a very comprehensive and thoughtful presentation. The Sweeney task force, set up by the previous government and which has been referred to by Mr Snobelen and his colleagues, in its interim report said there were not going to be any savings from amalgamating school boards. Mr Sweeney specifically said there could only be savings with significant changes to education finance. As you've said, Mr Snobelen has told us and it has been confirmed today that this information, the new formula, will not be available until after this legislation is passed. You're saying, basically, that it would be reasonable for you as a citizen and a parent to expect that the information would be available prior to the passage of this legislation.

Ms Buxton: Absolutely.

Mr Wildman: If it is possible for the government to come up with a formula for determining what basic levels of educational services should be available to each student in Ontario, with some flexibility based on various factors, and that then would determine how much money is flowed to students across the province, would it really matter what kind of governance there is in education?

Ms Buxton: For me to make some kind of informed decision about how I want education to run, I need to know that, but I must say it's not just knowing what the formula is or what the criteria are that disturbs me. It's

not knowing how that relates to what this government thinks of as a well-educated citizen. You hear a lot about being able to perform well in international tests and things like that. Frankly, that's not the definition for me, that's not a vision of what an educated student is. What you've just described alone would not make enough of a difference to me.

**Mr Wildman:** And I suspect that what the basic services that are going to be funded are is crucial.

Ms Buxton: Yes, and I have to see how that relates to what they believe to be a good education.

Mr Skarica: I am going to ask you a couple of questions that may be unfair —

The Chair: Actually, you're down to one question.

Mr Skarica: All right. You said this is a system that works and we heard from another presenter that there's nothing we need to fix. Perhaps I could point this out to you: The Roman Catholic board around this time last year came out with a huge deficit, and it turned out from the audit report that the trustees had no idea how it happened on the left hand, and that board did not know what the right hand was doing. We heard at committee hearings last year that we had an unfunded liability for the teachers' retirement gratuity that was at least \$1 billion — that's what the ministry says — but Beth Cooper from the Windsor board said it could be up to \$10 billion.

So here you have a system with massive deficits. Trustees don't know the left hand from the right hand, and we don't even know what the unfunded liabilities are. How can you say it works?

Ms Buxton: You're saying that the system is com-

pletely corrupt and completely broken?

Mr Skarica: I'm not saying that, but you're saying it works. Don't you concede that there are serious problems —

Ms Buxton: I have made that point. I am not the person who sat here and said, "Nothing needs to be fixed." I don't believe there's a system on earth that doesn't require fixing, including this one, but your government clearly feels it has the power to go in there and fix things unilaterally. Why does that necessitate the entire pulling down of the system? Why don't you go after the things you've just described to me? Show them how to fix them. I'm a parent, I work, I have three kids; I'm not going to be able to tell you how to do that. I don't have paid assistants. Figure that out and go after that, but don't pull the whole thing down and say, "It's because of these few instances over here that we have to yank the whole system apart." There's no system that's perfect, and that's not the way.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Buxton, for your intervention, your interest in staying around all day, and the promptness with which you prepared your presentation.

# CANADIAN TAXPAYERS FEDERATION, ONTARIO DIVISION

The Chair: Our next presenter is from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, Ontario division, Paul Pagnuelo. While he comes up, Mrs McLeod?

Mrs McLeod: On a point of order, Madam Chair: Is there anybody staffing these hearings from the Ministry of Education?

The Chair: It appears that there is no one.

Mrs McLeod: I have perhaps somewhat limited experience with committee hearings, Madam Chair, but I thought it was the practice, if the ministry took the hearings seriously, to have a ministry person staffing the hearings to be able to respond more directly to the questions raised.

The Chair: We have the parliamentary assistant.

Mr Skarica: It is customary. Every time I've been in these committee hearings we have had somebody, so I'll

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate that. I want to report the fact that after a full day of hearings we have not had the Ministry of Education staffing the committee, and it concerns me.

The Chair: There was someone earlier, I understand. Ms McLeod, you had some questions.

Mrs McLeod: The questions that follow from this presentation are — I accept the fact that the last few questions were somewhat debatable questions and not information-seeking questions, but the questions around funding formula, which has already been raised, were very specific and should be placed on the record as questions requiring —

Mr Froese: Is this a point of order or what?

Mrs McLeod: No, these are questions for the Ministry of Education to respond to.

The Chair: They are questions for information that Ms McLeod wants to be forwarded to the ministry.

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): I think we should explain that to the man. It's not fair to the presenter.

The Chair: With respect, Mr Jordan, we dealt with this earlier. We said we would defer it to the end of Ms Buxton's presentation.

Mrs McLeod: I'm actually attempting to do it very

Mr Jordan: I would count it as an interruption to the

gentleman who is ready to make his presentation.

The Chair: I understand your point. Ms McLeod,

please continue.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much, and I'm trying to do it as quickly as possible. The second question that was raised was: In what specific ways does this bill further the minister's vision of education? The question that comes from this presentation and from the previous one is: Why is legislation proceeding before any of the basic questions regarding implementation have been addressed? From the earlier presentation, a very specific question: Why is the term for the EIC members three years when the transition period, according to legislation, ends on December 31, 1997?

Mr Skarica: I'm writing them down as fast as I can.
Mrs McLeod: In the interest of time, I'll provide them afterwards.

The Chair: Mr Pagnuelo, thank you very much for your patience as we conduct these hearings and thank you very much for being here today. You have 15 minutes to

make your presentation. Any time you don't use will be used for questions by the members.

Mr Paul Pagnuelo: Good evening, Madam Chair and committee members, and thank you for the opportunity to comment on Bill 104, which reduces the number of school boards and trustees.

Eliminating unnecessary duplication and overlap, reducing cost, improving efficiency, clarifying responsibilities, improving accountability and making the property tax system fairer are all goals that I think few could object to, and certainly they're goals that the Canadian

Taxpayers Federation supports.

After years of debate, waffling and inaction on municipal and school board governance, disentanglement and property tax reform, what we have just witnessed is that Ontario has been turned inside out and upside down, but the fact that the Harris government has confronted these issues head-on with a package of sweeping reforms doesn't mean the solutions are, in many cases, the right ones.

The week of January 13 was a whirlwind of activity. The pace of announcements was breathtaking as minister after minister outlined changes in the structures and responsibilities of our school boards and municipalities, and overlaying it all was a revamping of the way property taxes are assessed and apportioned.

The federation has characterized mega-week as a combination of good news and bad news but with, unfortunately, much of the good news being outweighed

by the bad. **1740** 

In reviewing the various mega-week announcements, the good-news portion, in our view, largely relates to the changes related to education. Education Minister John Snobelen should be commended, not condemned, for firmly putting the lid on out-of-control school board spending, tax increases and misdirected classroom cuts by administrators and trustees. By tying the purse-strings of the new regional boards and stripping away their taxing authority, the minister was able to reduce the number of school boards and avoid the megacity consequences of higher costs and more bureaucracy.

Despite one's political ideology, I find it difficult to believe that any government in this country, regardless of political stripe, would deliberately set out to lay waste to the future prosperity of a democratic and civilized society by de-educating tomorrow's workforce. I don't believe the education minister is out to wreck our education

system, as some have charged.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation welcomes many of the proposed changes to Ontario's education system. Having had the opportunity to meet personally with the education minister, we believe he is sincere in his determination to reduce administrative costs and, more important, to refocus resources to meet the needs of students instead of administrators.

The minister's funding model, which recognizes local circumstances, will ensure that no Ontario student is deprived of the opportunity to receive a high quality of education just because they're in an assessment-poor

board, and that to us is very key.

With the province gaining control over education spending through its funding model, the lid has finally been put on out-of-control school board spending and tax increases. The problem currently facing our existing provincial school boards is not a revenue shortfall but one of overspending. Existing school board budgets provide limited discretionary opportunities for cost cutting in non-employee expense areas without eliminating all expenditures for classroom supplies, computers etc. As a consequence, salaries and benefits in both the instructional and non-teaching areas must also be considered as realistic opportunities for system-wide cost reductions.

While the federation has been calling for the government to put a complete end to the use of property taxes for funding education, removing the costs from the residential tax bill is a major step in the right direction. However, having said that, we are very concerned about the corresponding downloading of social services to balance the ledger. Trading education for welfare, in our

view, is totally inappropriate.

By tying the purse-strings of the new regional boards and by stripping away their taxing authority, the minister has taken the necessary steps to ensure that administrative costs are actually reduced in the consolidated boards. Because of this and the limited mandates that boards will have, we don't have the same concerns about the amalgamation of school boards that we have about the amalgamation of municipalities. In fact, we would have preferred if the province had gone further by eliminating boards altogether, vesting the real decision-making and ultimate accountability with the schools themselves. Just as we have been arguing in the case of municipal governance, the solution to greater efficiency and better accountability for results is moving government closer to the people, not in making it more remote. We see making government more accountable, more responsive, closer to the people, by bringing the power down to the local schools.

Cutting the number of trustees, capping their honorarium at \$5,000, and eliminating potential conflict-of-interest situations by prohibiting school board employees and their spouses from running for office are moves

which we also applaud.

Do we have concerns? We most certainly do. A major challenge for the minister will be to ensure that salary and benefit costs are tightly controlled. Even more important, we are concerned that the education bureaucracy at Queen's Park, which has to accept much of the blame for the mediocre quality of education today in the province, will grow into an even larger and more rigid bureaucracy. The ministry itself has to be turned inside out and upside down, set on the right track to quality improvement, and right-sized.

We are also concerned about how the assets and liabilities of the existing boards will be disposed of and how these may relate back to the funding model. With the province now having responsibility for funding and for collecting taxes, where do these go and how are they distributed? Who ends up with ownership?

While moving major decision-making affecting our children's education down to the local school level

through advisory councils is a positive move in the right direction, a major concern is how to ensure that those councils don't end up being co-opted by special interests, including the administration of the new boards.

We are also concerned that the reforms do not go far enough to include competitive alternatives such as charter

chools.

Overall, we think the minister is to be congratulated for introducing major and long-overdue reforms designed to reduce costs, improve accountability and restore credibility to Ontario's education system.

I'll be pleased in whatever remaining time is available

to answer any questions.

**Mr Wildman:** I appreciate your presentation. You say you believe that government should be more accountable and that you should bring government closer to people as part of that. Do you think creating, particularly in northern Ontario, boards that are thousands of miles across an area is bringing government closer to the people?

Mr Pagnuelo: It's my sincere hope, and obviously the minister is the only one who has got the longer-term view that may not have been completely shared yet, is that boards will disappear in time. The best thing that can happen to education is to bring real decision-making down to the local schools. There are problems with the establishment of school councils in terms of getting good people interested in sitting on them. How do you ensure that they clearly represent the community, that they're not stacked for special interest? Those are serious problems that need to be addressed and need to be overcome.

But to me the greatest thing, and I say this not just as a taxpayer but as a parent of two children in the system, parents and the community have got to become much more involved in the education and the importance of education to our children. If parents would rather sib back at 7 o'clock at night and watch Wheel of Fortune than go out and participate in local school council meetings, we're never going to really turn the situation around positively in this province.

Putting the power down at the local school level is really the ultimate solution in terms of improving accountability, improving monitoring the standards and having parents and local citizens more directly involved

than they are today.

Mr Carroll: Thank you very much, sir. Picking up on that same point, one of the concerns we hear from many presenters is this concern about parents not wanting any more responsibility when it comes to education, parents in poorer areas not being able to come forward and do an effective job. In the business you're in, the work you do, you deal totally with taxpayers as a spokesman for taxpayers. Are there ways for us to get people involved at the local level in school councils, and what are some of those ways? Is your organization in a position to help us with some of those ways?

Mr Pagnuelo: We'd be glad, obviously, to sit down and share thoughts in terms of how to overcome the apathy that's out there today. I have to say there's a lot of apathy, and it's not just in terms of school councils. We see it all the time. One of the amazing things we're seeing happening in Toronto right now and in areas such as the suburbs of Hamilton is that citizens are waking up

and they're realizing that they can't afford to be apathetic; they've got to be more involved and plugged in.

What has happened over the last 30 years is that governments have created this whole environment and approach to entitlement which has basically said: "You can abdicate your responsibilities as a parent. You can abdicate your responsibilities as a voter. Just leave it to government. We'll take care of every need you want." Parents have really become unplugged from the system.

I know how difficult it was, just in the case of the two schools our children go to, to find people who will stand to be elected to the school councils. I know how difficult it's going to be next year for those same schools to replace the existing members. There is no easy answer, and I know parents today — in today's work environment, it's very hard. You have both spouses generally working today. The demands on time are great, but I have to sit back as a parent — all of us I think have to sit back and say, "What's more important?"

There are a lot of other things we can become involved in, but I think our children have to be number one priority in all our lives, whether we've got children in the system today or not. We may be grandparents, aunts, uncles, what have you, but I think the future success of not just this province but this country depends on the future workforce and equipping them with the tools and the knowledge that they need.

I don't think we can do enough in terms of improving education and the system in Ontario, but a big part of that has got to be getting citizens in local communities much more involved than they have been in the past. We

can't play passive roles any longer.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): On page 3 of your brief you say that "the solution to greater efficiency and better accountability for results is moving government closer to the people, and not in making it

more remote." How does this bill do that?

Mr Pagnuelo: What I'm saying is, if you look at what the new mandates of school boards will be in terms of they're out of the funding game, they're out of the spending game to all intents and purposes, as we said in our presentation, what I'd like to see is the government going much further by simply eliminating boards and bringing it back to the local school.

Mr Duncan: If I can, though, you're contradicting yourself. You say on the one hand, "We don't like what they're doing, we don't think they're doing it right, but

we're supporting this." I don't understand that.

Mr Pagnuelo: No, what I'm saying is it doesn't go far enough. We would have liked to see it go further.
Mr Duncan: Actually this goes, if I might —

Mr Pagnuelo: No, I'd much rather —

Mr Duncan: — this goes the other way. This, in my view, and I think a number of experts have said it, takes us away from the local area.

Mr Wildman: It gives it to Queen's Park.

Mr Duncan: This gives it to Queen's Park. How is

that going to improve efficiency?

**Mr Skarica:** On a point of order, Madam Chair: This is really inappropriate. This is a witness and he's being interrupted by politicians.

The Chair: Mr Pagnuelo, please respond.

Mr Pagnuelo: What I have read in the bill and the minister's pronouncements is in terms of strengthening school councils, and that's where I think we should be focusing, not on boards. If we look at boards and their history in this province, in my experience with boards at first hand they've been a major disappointment. What I'm beginning to see, it's a long, slow struggle, it's got difficulties that have to be worked out, but it's bringing power to the local level, and by the local level, I mean the local school.

Mr Duncan: But I -

The Chair: Mr Duncan, we're out of time. Mr Pagnuelo, thank you very much for coming and presenting to us today. We really appreciate your being here.

## NORTH YORK PARENT ASSEMBLY

The Chair: The next presenter, North York Parent Assembly, Mrs Shelley Carroll. Thank you for being here. Welcome.

Mrs Shelley Carroll: My vice-chair is Audrey Ormrod.

Madam Chair, Mr Skarica and the esteemed members of the committee, good afternoon, or should I say, good evening. The present Minister of Education and Training and his predecessor are familiar with the North York Parent Assembly. Both have appeared as keynote speakers at our annual fall conferences. Both know that we are not a recently formed political action group but an elected, city-wide group founded by parents in 1992 and recognized by the North York board, to enable parents to become more meaningfully involved as partners in the education process, a group that would not be afraid of change but would in fact suggest and help implement changes to the system that educates their children.

A motion to adopt the attached resolution to oppose Bill 104 was passed unanimously by the Metro Toronto School Board, and the elected ward representatives of the North York Parent Assembly voted to do the same on February 6. The next logical step was to ask each local school advisory council chair to propose the same motion to their members.

Though time was a problem, the responses have been overwhelming. In North York these strengthened school advisory councils are opposed to Bill 104 until it is accompanied by a detailed plan for future education, including a detailed funding model and an outline of the level of classroom support we can expect for items such as student services, class size, maintenance services, extracurricular programs and other local programs.

The Minister of Education received letters of concern from North York schools and the parent assembly in the fall. We are still waiting for any reply. The North York board has been used by the minister as an example of a board with excellent practices such as benchmark testing, but will locally successful programs such as the equitable offering, through full transportation, of French immersion continue at its present level of quality? Because Bill 104 does not answer parents' concerns but dismisses them, schools like Rippleton Public School, Pierre Laporte Middle School, Hollywood Public School and Sheppard Public School voted to adopt the resolution to oppose Bill 104.

North York parents have asked again and again what the minister means by "classroom" when he insists that education reform should not affect the classroom. We have never had a direct answer to the question, but we believe that the difference between classroom and administration is the difference between the school building and the central office building. The principal and vice-principal, the caretakers, the secretary, the lunchroom supervisors; the teacher-librarian, the guidance counsellors, teachers' aides, the special education resource teacher, the psycho-educational consultant, the speech pathologist and the multicultural support staff all have a direct relationship to student success in the classroom.

In Metro, where one third of the children in the classroom have lived in Canada for fewer than four years — in schools like our Grenoble Public School the ratio rises to three out of four — where nearly one third come from low-income families, and one in four come from single-parent homes, the teacher does not have a classroom without these people's support. Because you do not see them as "in-classroom essentials," the schools like Elkhorn Public School, Northview Secondary School, Crestview Elementary School, Claude Watson School for the Arts and Stilecroft Public School voted to adopt the

resolution to oppose Bill 104.

If this bill passes, all the assets of our municipal school board will be assumed by the province. Local taxes have built and maintained all school buildings in North York without the benefit of provincial grants. Our school board trustees have endeavoured to anticipate local needs and account for projected enrolment statistics. When a building is not in full use as a school, they have arranged for responsible community use and have generated revenue from that space. Because the province's control of these assets will put that revenue in provincial coffers and minimize community use, schools like Faywood Elementary and Middle School, Summit Heights Elementary School, McNicoll Public School, Maple Leaf Public School and Highland Junior High School voted to adopt the resolution to oppose Bill 104.

The Education Improvement Commission is undemocratic and legally questionable to us in that its powers are retroactive to January 13. Parents are opposed to it as explained in the bill. Many facets of our education system are on hold pending the approval of the EIC, which negatively impacts successful local initiatives. We ask the minister why he would introduce another expensive tier of education governance, giving the school board licence to expand to meet their demands for monthly reporting? Because we have no confidence in the agenda of the EIC, schools like Roywood Public School, St Andrew's Junior High School, Dallington Public School, Newtonbrook Secondary School and Calico Public School have voted to adopt the resolution to oppose Bill 104.

The most frequently asked question at our parent meetings since January 13 has been, "What happened to secondary school reform and the back-to-basics junior curriculum?" We ask because considerable effort went into our responses to that proposal and we know that massive curriculum reform cannot be achieved simultaneously with the administrative reform necessary to amalgamate these Metro boards. The in-school administrators and the teachers were never going to achieve the

reform without instructional support from their boards. Because Bill 104 leaves our children and their teachers with no faith in the ministry's goal to reform the secondary curriculum with input from parents, students and local educators, schools like Stanley Public School, Donview Middle School, Broadlands Public School, Dunlace Public School, Sloane Public School and Bayview Elementary and Middle School have voted to adopt the resolution to oppose Bill 104.

The difficulties of dealing with 67,000 students in North York are known to the North York Parent Assembly. Communications with families of students in an urban centre are a vital part of high-quality student results and yet we face a major challenge every time we set out to reach all of the students' homes on behalf of just the assembly. Our board educators and our trustees report the same difficulty. Communications are but one small aspect of dealing with 300,000 students if the ministry proceeds as planned.

Parents have asked on several occasions for proof in the form of even one written study that bigger is better. Because the parents feel that reducing the number of school boards has nothing to do with improving or even maintaining the quality of service, schools like Steelesview Public School, Georges Vanier Secondary School, Finch Public School, Churchill Public School and Norman Ingram Public School have voted to adopt the

resolution to oppose Bill 104.

The biggest concern, and the one hardest to address in the time constraints today, is over the changes to the role of trustees. Fortunately, Conservative MPP David Turnbull of York Mills riding has already heard our views on this subject and he asked us to prepare a brief detailing this position. I submit it to you today. It's included with your package and it underlines for all present that we in no way pretend that there are not people who have problems with the trustee system at present, but we do not have the problems that Mr Snobelen alluded to at the Enoch Turner School House and the brief will tell you that.

We do not see how our trustees could represent the numbers you propose in assigning them full federal ridings, more constituents than even city counsellors will have according to Bill 103. They are guardians of extensively used services, not occasionally accessed services such as health or even garbage collection. We wonder who could possibly be interested in running for trustee, given the inequitable enormity of the urban task versus that of, for example, Nipissing. This brief outlines our fears.

The only thing we know about the funding model as yet is that you are removing its control from the local trustees. Funding will be calculated on a per pupil basis, but who will allocate it to the schools? If not the trustees, then how can they be, as the minister puts it, guardians of local education? Because we have no confidence that you will read this brief and amend the changes to the role of the trustee, schools like Yorkview Public School, Derrydown Public School, Forest Manor Public School, Cassandra Public School and Owen Public School have voted to adopt the resolution to oppose Bill 104.

Because many more school advisory councils will meet this week to discuss this and will vote to adopt the resolution and will ask the North York Parent Assembly to communicate their position to you, we strongly urge you today to withdraw the bill until you can provide parents, whose vested interest is most precious, with a detailed funding plan and an outline of the level of classroom support to be guaranteed to ensure the success of our children and therefore the future of the province of Ontario.

I leave you with the words of one of the co-chairs of the Royal Commission on Learning, Mr Gerald Caplan: "Successful system-wide restructuring of education cannot be achieved without the support of its stakeholders."

Thank you.

Mr Skarica: Perhaps instead of asking a question I can give you an answer. You referred to the secondary school reform. The deadline date for submissions was originally the end of November and that was extended to January 2, and we got 23,000 submissions. It'll take until the end of February to collate all those, so you'll get the report some time in March. That's what's happened to it.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much for your presentation. I was watching you respond visually to the suggestions of the previous presenter, that parents were apathetic and needed to become more involved. Clearly you are parents who are extremely involved in your children's education and anxious to have that kind of involvement.

Tell me why you would be resistant to a direction that would see more and more power to your parent council when with your kind of involvement your kids would be okay.

Mrs Carroll: We know what children respond to at school. As I said to a reporter, and it appeared in the Star a month ago, parents were very glad to see the proposed policy memorandum 122 in that it gave us a licence and a list to ask questions regarding our education system. We needed that. There are schools where principals were not allowing us to ask some of those questions, but we never wanted it to extend to the point where we began to usurp the principal's role. Once the principal loses a sense of authority in the school based on parents' conversations, he is a goner in the face of his students.

Mr Wildman: I would also think that you might not want to usurp, to use your term, the role of the trustee.

Mrs Carroll: Absolutely. I should say that when you're reading the brief on the role of the trustees, we wrote that brief based on our experience with them, not based on a conversation with trustees: "We have to write a brief. What do you want us to say?" It's based on our experience, since the founding of the parent assembly, in our work with them.

Mr Wildman: Can I ask a question on that? Did Mr Turnbull indicate to you that he would bring those concerns forward for amendments to the legislation?

Mrs Carroll: He did say that he would share them in private caucus and he did say that he would let me know how that went. I have not heard from him since.

The Chair: Thank you very much, both of you, for your presentation this evening. The hour's late and we appreciate that you stayed all this long while to present to us.

Mrs Caplan: As an MPP from North York, I just want to say what an excellent presentation and how pride I am of the parent council.

The Chair: Ditto from the Chair, but we'll move on.

## YORK BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: Our last presenter, and by no means the least, is the York Board of Education, Mr Wales. Thank you very much for being so patient.

Mr Sam Wales: Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. On February 10, 1997, the Board of Education for the City of York passed a motion to oppose Bill 104 as the board members had serious concerns about the potential impact on the education offered to the students in the city of York.

The brevity of Bill 104 speaks to only a few of the components that make up education in the province and leaves an abundance of unanswered questions. The legislation sets out a model of governance, proposes a role for school councils and establishes an extremely powerful commission. These areas will be the focus of this presentation.

First, local representation: As of January 1, 1998, Metropolitan Toronto taxpayers will effectively lose local representation at the school level. Bill 104 limits the number of trustees in Metropolitan Toronto to 22. This means that the new Toronto district school board, with a student population of over 300,000 and with 550 schools, will see each school trustee representing an average of 25 schools within their representative area. Each trustee would be responsible for these schools and would answer to approximately 70,000 taxpayers.

School trustees have traditionally worked at the community level, offering very direct service to their constituents. How will a school trustee be able to respond to the needs and concerns of such a large group? The magnitude of this proposed school district will break the tradition of local school representation and eliminate the unique position that our children, our students, have held in this country since our nation's birth.

Parents communicate with trustees at school council meetings, at school events, at home and school meetings. This contact strengthens communication links and assures parents that the education being offered to their children is a priority for their elected representative. For the non-parent taxpayer, this strong communication link enables a trustee to respond knowledgeably on what is actually happening in the schools. Parents and non-parents, and students too, have a right to ask questions and deserve to have those questions answered by a local representative.

With 25 schools to represent, trustees cannot fulfil the duties of the position. How can the traditional community approach of the school trustee exist with a constituency of more than 70,000 people?

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There are many trustees who give more than is required by the Education Act: They offer connections into the business world that lead to partnerships, they link schools to other community groups and they offer a source of moral support for parents seeking to encourage their children to strive for excellence. In the private

sector, one would be rewarded for adding value to an organization. With Bill 104, public education and Ontarians will not be rewarded but will be punished by losing local representation at the school level.

School councils: The Minister of Education has stated that school councils will take a greater role in the running of the school. Even without school councils, parents have always given their opinion and have kept a watchful eye on schools.

Parents today are taking the opportunity to be part of school councils, and that's positive. I believe you are hearing here in this room, as I have heard at my local school advisory councils, that parents do not want to run schools but they do want to be involved. They are volunteers with limited time and do not want to assume roles that are normally performed by education professionals.

There are many communities, especially in Metro Toronto, where parents cannot be as active in schools as they would like to be. These are parents who are single, who are struggling in a new country, who are both working long hours and who are striving to pull themselves out of poverty. Because of the demands of work and the home, they are not available to participate at their children's school.

As the funding model will most likely reduce the number of education professionals, namely supervisory officers, and Bill 104 will significantly reduce the number of trustees, there will be no option but to download more responsibilities to school councils. This is unfair to school council members and ultimately unfair to students.

The funding model: Taking \$1 billion out of education in Ontario will take dollars out of the classroom. The unique needs of students in the Metro Toronto area call for an infusion of compensatory educational supports. Students from the city of York have been identified, through Statistics Canada census data, as the neediest of the needy.

I quote from the Board of Education for the City of York's publication "Bigger is Not Better": The Case Against Amalgamation:

"According to the 1991 census information from Statistics Canada, compared to other municipalities in Metro, the greater Toronto area outside Metro, Ontario or Canada, the city of York has: the largest percentage of low income families; the largest percentage of parents with less than grade 9 education (which is the generally accepted level of functional illiteracy); the largest percentage of single-parent families; the largest percentage of unemployed; the largest percentage of population who do not have English as their mother tongue; the largest percentage of immigrants."

Long before we had such concrete statistics to validate our concern, the Board of Education for the City of York was addressing this reality, by offering students compensatory support in an attempt to offset these disadvantages: before- and after-school programs, lunchtime programs, readiness-for-school programs, summer school, English as a second language, enrichment programs, remedial programs, English skills development, inclusive curriculum, interpreters, translations, race relations and, considering our high urban density, a strong safe schools initiative.

For several decades, the city of York school system has offered night-time and daytime programs for adults. These programs aim to help parents and community members achieve a higher level of basic education and skills training. If mom and dad read better or get a better job, their children will reap the benefits, and so will the community, the province and the country.

What if the funding model necessitates the elimination of these interventions that are available now to these students? Our society will pay the price later, and a hefty one at that.

Just this weekend, the Toronto Star reproduced a chart listing the funds spent per pupil in each province and in the United States. I shudder to think how Ontario students, and especially city of York students, will fare in tomorrow's world if Ontario's funding drops even lower. Will the funding model destine the students from the most populous area in the country, and the most needy, to a disadvantaged future? Will the funding be so restrictive to ensure that all decisions are economically based? I sincerely hope that this will not be the case and that you, the committee members, will hear the concerns presented.

Education Improvement Commission: Half of the text of Bill 104 is dedicated to specifying the powers of the Education Improvement Commission, powers so significant that I wonder what the proposed new school districts will be allowed to do. In January 1998 the members of the school districts will be duly elected to represent their constituents, but the Education Improvement Commission will continue to hold control until the end of the year 2000

The Education Improvement Commission has the power to call for ministry regulations that can control the functioning of the school districts and has extensive power to enforce what the commission deems appropriate for those school districts. The fate of thousands of employees and the fate of hundreds of thousands of students will be controlled by the Education Improvement Commission. To whom do these students and employees present their concerns? To the elected trustees, who will have very limited power, or to the commission?

Within this submission I have raised a number of questions about local representation, school councils, the funding model and the need for compensatory education, and the Education Improvement Commission.

The students, the parents and the taxpayers of Ontario need answers. Bill 104 raises many questions and does not answer them. I call upon the committee members to consider answers to these questions and present amendments to the legislation that respond to these questions.

Mrs Caplan: Thank you. It's the end of a long day and you're eloquent and passionate and you've repeated what we've heard from a number of presenters today, but I think it's important and it can't be said too often, and that's the concern of the length of time that you will have this — I call it the "ick" —

Mr Wales: Or "eek."

Mrs Caplan: — "eek" — and as someone who is involved and chair of your board, what do you see as the role of the trustee? There really will not be a trustee. What would be their role in the new regime?

Mr Wales: Unfortunately, it's not going to be very much. I was quoted in the Sun originally once, and unfortunately it's a quote that I don't like to use but it was in Friday's paper. I said that the trustees are literally being castrated, and that's what it is. I think we're losing democracy. There is no local representation. Who are you going to get to run? I've heard this before. Very few are going to run. If they need to work and they need to compensate for that time, \$5,000 is not going to do it. As a trustee for \$5,000, I'll probably go to a board meeting, maybe a couple of committee meetings; "That's it, thank you very much." What happens when a parent calls me? "Sorry, I don't have time to talk to you. Why don't go call the board office, which is representing 300,000 students, or why don't you call the provincial government."

The question here is that we've always had local representation and it's always gone beyond what the Education Act has said. Is that bad? I don't think so. As I said in my submission, in the private sector if you work hard, if you're creative, if you're a leader, if you take charge in your organization, you're promoted. I think that's what trustees will need to do, but they won't be able to do that.

1820

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much, Mr Wales, for

your presentation and for your patience.

One of the arguments that has been raised for the committee about the government's agenda, which includes Bill 104, is the fact that in Metropolitan Toronto there is about \$8,000 spent per student as opposed to some other parts of the province where only half of that is spent, and the suggestion that this is not equity. We've heard all the arguments with regard to ESL and immigrants and so on, but you've talked about the very significant needs in York. Do you anticipate that after the changes come into place, if they do come into place, that the \$5.4 billion that the government is removing from the residential property tax will all be transferred in grants to boards across Ontario, starting in 1998?

Mr Wales: That's an interesting statement. That's an interesting question. Supposedly, it will be. My greatest fear is — well, there are two things that I touch upon — the loss of local taxation, which I think you've heard today and which I think is very important. I think there's a constitutional issue there. Second is the funding allocation. What is the formula? You can take the money out, but are we going to get it back? I don't know.

To set up a framework such as the commission is fine, but setting it up without having a formula and instituting the legislation before we have the opportunity to input and find out what we're going to get back, it's — you know, when you go buy a house or you go buy a car, you do a little research and you find out what you're going to get.

Mr Wildman: You may still get a lemon.

Mr Wales: Yes, you may still get a lemon. We've paid our money, we've paid our taxes, but we don't know what kind of school system we're going to get. That scares me.

Mr Froese: Thank you for coming. I've read your comments that Ontarians will be punished because they're losing local representation. As you know, the bill will

enhance the school councils. Where I come from anyway, the parents have been concerned that their elected representative haven't been there, like you say they have been there. There's that side of the issue too. I understand there's the other side of the issue, like you presented. Parents in my riding have complained to me that their representation isn't necessarily there and that when taxes increase, they go to pay for school boards, buildings and so on, those dollars not being put into the classroom or used wisely. There's that side of the argument. They want local representation, where I come from anyway.

Obviously, your presentation speaks against that, but in a world where, if you can envision it, Bill 104 has been passed, how do you see the new school boards, the district school boards, and the parent councils working together to improve that concern of parents that dollars are spent wisely and that the education system is improved? Or do you believe there's nothing wrong,

everything's okay?

Mr Wales: First of all, there are politicians on all levels — municipal, provincial and federal — who are terrific and there are some who are absolutely terrible. It's an elected democracy. When you go knock on a door and you say, "Hi, I'm Sam Wales," and you smile at them and they take you for your word, that may not be what they're getting when you get elected. I can't answer for individual trustees, but I can say that on the whole many of them are very good trustees and do work in the community.

Myself, I have been involved. Having been a board member at Ryerson Polytechnic University, I initiated a scholarship fund with Ryerson, through the John Brooks Community Foundation, for Vaughan Road Collegiate. I did that. Recently in my community, in ward 3 in the city of York, I initiated a Saturday morning tutorial program, because I saw a need in a community where there was poverty, single parents, high immigration. They didn't have the money. In ward 1, if you didn't like the school system, you could send your kids to a private school. You couldn't do that in ward 3. I think there are many levels of quality of politicians and I've seen many of them.

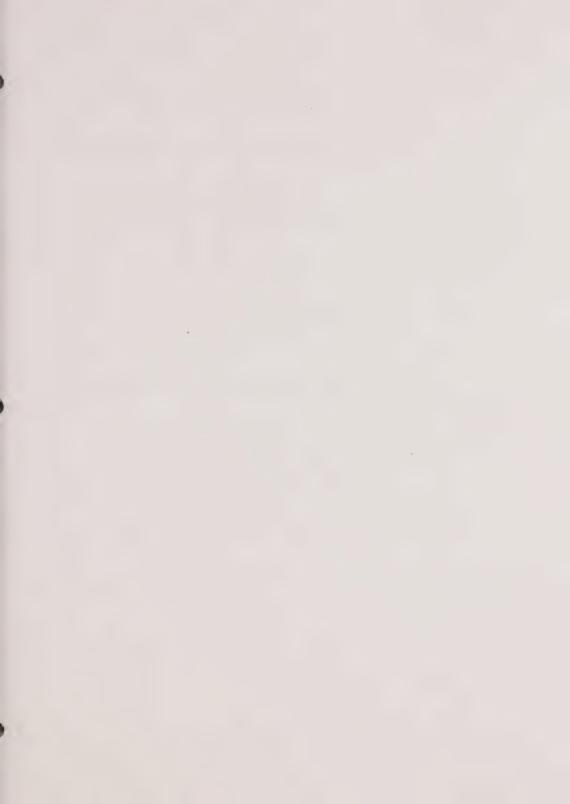
I really think that school councils want to do good for the school, and most of them I don't think want to be involved. I've talked to parents who don't want to make those heavy decisions. They want professionals, and that's what educators are.

How do we get good elected representation? It's, "The majority rules." That's politics and that's the way it's going to be. Sometimes you get a good one; sometimes you get a bad one.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Wales, for being here today and for your thoughtful presentation, and thank you to your colleague for also being here.

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to thank you all for your interventions and your cooperation during what has been a very long and hectic day. I remind you that we meet tomorrow at 9 am in room 151. I would ask you to take all of your documents with you for tomorrow morning. We are adjourned and I would ask the subcommittee to remain.

The committee adjourned at 1826.





#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Chair / Président: Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview L)
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville L)

\*Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole L)

\*Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent PC)

\*Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview L)

\*Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville L)

\*Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock PC)

\*Mrs Helen Johns (Huron PC)

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\*Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William L)

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York PC)

\*Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain PC)

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand PC)

\*Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex PC)

\*Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma ND)

\*In attendance / présents

Substitutions present / Membres remplaçants présents:

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury L) for Mr Duncan

Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury L)

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale ND)

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North / -Nord PC)

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre / -Centre PC)

Clerk / Greffière: Ms Tonia Grannum

Staff / Personnel: Mr Ted Glenn, research officer, Legislative Research Service

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## Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 18 February 1997

Standing committee on social development

Fewer School Boards Act, 1997

# Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36e législature

## Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 18 février 1997

Comité permanent des affaires sociales

Loi de 1997 réduisant le nombre de conseils scolaires

Chair: Annamarie Castrilli Clerk: Tonia Grannum Présidente : Annamarie Castrilli Greffière : Tonia Grannum

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#### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Tuesday 18 February 1997

#### ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

#### COMITÉ PERMANENT DES AFFAIRES SOCIALES

Mardi 18 février 1997

The committee met at 0902 in room 151.

#### FEWER SCHOOL BOARDS ACT, 1997 LOI DE 1997 RÉDUISANT LE NOMBRE DE CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Consideration of Bill 104, An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system, providing for certain matters related to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 104, Loi de 1997 visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte, l'efficacité et la qualité du système scolaire ontarien en permettant la réduction du nombre des conseils scolaires, en créant la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation, chargée d'encadrer la transition vers le nouveau système, en prévoyant certaines questions liées aux élections de 1997 et en apportant d'autres améliorations à la Loi sur l'éducation et à la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.

#### ETOBICOKE FEDERATION OF RATEPAYERS' AND RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS

The Chair (Ms Annamarie Castrilli): Good morning. I think we're about ready to start. I want to welcome the Etobicoke Federation of Ratepayers' and Residents' Associations, Bob Gullins, president. Thank you very much for being with us this morning on such short notice and making your presentation. Just so you know, you'll have 15 minutes to make your presentation and any time that's left over will be open to the committee members to address some questions to you.

Mr Bob Gullins: Sure, that will be fine. I'll pre-empt my comments by just stating the time has been short. I apologize that I'm honestly not completely ready, but I think we have the gist of the federation's perspective in our presentation and I think that will be circulated to you shortly.

The Chair: No apologies necessary, under the circum-

Mr Gullins: We'll get under way. On a brief overview, it's pretty well unanimous among our organization that the quality of education is the first and foremost consideration. We in no way want to leave the impression that money concerns take precedence over the quality and accessibility by Ontario citizens to education. We believe it is education and opportunities which have contributed to the prosperity of Ontario and will continue to do so in the future.

In general, EFRRA members have a serious problem with the haste of the Ontario government in dealing with these very important matters. Artificial deadlines for implementation and an apparent lack of proper planning lead us to believe the change is merely a mask for the real changes yet to be introduced.

In part, we believe Bill 103 and Bill 104 were introduced concurrently because they support one another in a single objective. Though media coverage quotes government officials as stating they are in fact separate issues and just part of the reform package, we do not accept this and believe both bills must be dealt with in a supporting context. EFRRA is admittedly split on Bill 103, but is in unanimous agreement that the two bills support one another.

Government statements of late have led the public to believe the proposed changes are in preparation for the coming century. Our observations, the absence of vital statistical data and evasive answers on the ministry's part as to the results of the proposed changes make us fearful that this Gulf war could turn into the Charge of the Light

Brigade.

In conclusion, our past credit and support of the present administration for having a game plan is being quickly eroded as forced deadlines and an apparent lack of proper business planning is now being perceived as executing a hidden agenda to privatize education and, worse still, to introduce an American style of education into Canada.

Our comments: Our first perception of Bill 104 was that changes were necessary because (a) education standards have been eroded over the past few years and (b) there is tremendous waste throughout the system, attributed to duplication of services and the non-competitive nature of the school system. Available statistics seem to support our views, so convincing arguments could be put forward to scrap the systems and begin over again. We have since come to appreciate the consequences of such an action and have softened our original position.

Education is not the right of an élite group of residents. We believe it must be kept accessible to all who wish to further their education, and not just those with the financial resources. Ontario has in the past been able to support this concept and must continue this practice at all costs. This includes many of the special needs programs related directly to education.

There is general agreement among EFRRA member organizations on a number of issues. They include:

(a) Curriculum should be uniform throughout the province and include, with emphasis on, the 3Rs.

(b) Education must be accessible to all residents, including post-secondary education.

(c) The number of school boards can be reduced from the present level.

(d) There must be more coordination between the separate and public school board systems to cut costs and services.

(e) There must be a way of reducing pyramid-building in the board bureaucracies while maintaining meaningful public input into the system.

(f) Careful consideration must be given to addressing trustees' salaries and benefits, keeping in mind that we will get what we pay for. Cheaper is not always better.

(g) Slash-and-burn policies make the accountants happy, but their perspectives do not allow for innovation or imagination.

In addition, members believe the government proposals to substitute welfare, road maintenance, GO service etc on the property tax system for school funding is funda-

mentally wrong.

0910

That is the gist of the debate or the discussions we've had at EFRRA over the past couple of years. Of course, we have gone through the previous disentanglement and other government initiatives. It's a very large topic. We don't pretend to be the experts by any stretch of the imagination, but from a taxpayer's perspective, we can certainly judge by what's happening with our children and within the school system. We're very close to that, so in that context we submit our ideas for your consideration.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr Gullins. You leave us with a generous time for questions, 10 minutes, which is terrific. We start this morning with the third party.

The Chair: Mr Wildman, are you ready to ask some

questions? You have about three minutes.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I pass. I just arrived. The Chair: Then over to the government caucus.

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): I'll start. Thank you very much, Mr Gullins, for your presentation. In the last 10 years — some of these stats you may know — enrolment in our schools in Ontario is up 16%, inflation is up roughly 40%, spending by school boards is up 82% and taxes have gone up 120%. You stated yourself that our education standards are being eroded and that there's tremendous waste in the system. Accepting all of those things, do you not think the time is now to get on about some change? Why are you so concerned about our moving ahead with some change? Do the history and the stats not tell us we need to do it if we're going to preserve the system?

Mr Gullins: The context of those comments you made were really in response to what was perceived by us because of media reports. Of course, in large part you have the influence of media. But we have found lately that what we're being told is really not what is happening.

As far as the education system is concerned, and enrolment in post-secondary education, it's never been greater than it is today. The statistics that we were given were that 10, 15, 20 years ago the enrolment in secondary was about 10% of the population. Today it's around 25% for both colleges and universities. With those numbers

there are bound to be cases come to the surface that would make it appear as though the system is falling apart. You have a larger number of people entering the system; you're bound to have more problems, but certainly we wouldn't see that as a reason to change the system. We have to work along with it to provide or at least give an opportunity for people to better themselves and gain education.

Mr Carroll: So school board spending up at double the rate of inflation, by your own admission our standards being eroded and tremendous waste in the system, yet you don't believe it's time now to go forward with some fundamental, basic change to the system?

Mr Gullins: We're not saying we're opposed to changes within the system, but again, I think there are many reasons why the school boards are experiencing higher costs. Certainly outside Metro you have transportation costs. When I drive in the country I see hundreds of school buses sitting in lots and they're all used to transport children to school. It's a tremendous expense. I don't think we had that all that many years ago.

There is the computer age. Technology has increased at considerable cost to the school systems. There are any number of things, and of course wages and salaries have

all contributed to that.

Mr Carroll: That's all in the inflation of 40%.

**Mr Gullins:** That's included, certainly. When you say "double," I think you're referring to Metro Toronto, are you not?

**Mr Carroll:** I'm talking about province-wide. School board spending is up 82% during a time when inflation is up 40%.

Mr Gullins: Again, I'd want to hear what the reasons were and investigate that before I made any conclusions. The only thing we would agree with is, yes, it should be addressed and, yes, we do want to see changes, but the proposals that have been put forward to date, with artificial deadlines, seem to be putting too much pressure on the public to make conclusions. Based on that, we're going to make mistakes. If I made a definitive answer right now, I'd be making a mistake because I honestly don't know what the counterarguments are, and that's what we're looking for. We haven't seen that come out.

The Chair: For the official opposition, Mr Duncan. Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): If I understand what you're saying correctly, you are arguing that your federation recognizes the need for change in the system. You'd like to see more efficiencies, better use of the money, but you're concerned about this particular bill because you see it as a Trojan Horse to come in and cut more money out of education at a time when your federation of ratepayers wants to spend money; they just want to be sure the money is spent appropriately and that the results we see are good.

Mr Gullins: We all want to see our taxes come down, but I think the onus is on the government or those proposing the changes to demonstrate very clearly, number one, that it is going to be a tax saving and, number two, where it is going to end up. We want some security that the system is going to work when it's finished and that it isn't strictly a dollars-and-cents matter, which in many

regards it appears to be.

Mr Duncan: Would it be fair to say that in response to the arguments around the issues of increased costs — and in our view, in the view of the official opposition, really taken out of context — would it be your view and the view of your federation that there are cost increases over the last 20 years that might be related to things like improved program services for disabled kids, junior kindergarten and other services that benefit education and benefit the overall economy?

**Mr Gullins:** There's no question about it. Even the fact that we have two school boards that have now been expanded to secondary school. When I graduated back in the 1960s that wasn't the case.

Mr Duncan: So schools aren't the same today as they were in the 1960s?

Mr Gullins: Oh no, definitely not.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I appreciate your brief and I appreciate the focus on the concern for education and accessible education. I also appreciate the fact that from a ratepayer's perspective you want to see taxes preferably go down, but certainly not go up, and I wonder whether your association has addressed the companion piece to this, which is taking education off the property tax but in turn offloading significant new social costs on to the property tax and leaving business having to pick up its share of that offload at the same time that business still has to pay its education tax.

**Mr Gullins:** We have a problem with removing it. We haven't concluded how you would address getting the funding to support the education, but what we see, taking the education and downloading the other services, no,

definitely there's something wrong.

Mr Wildman: I apologize for being late. I missed the presentation but I had the opportunity to read it while you were answering questions. I'd like to ask you a question specifically related to the last part of your written brief. From what you've been saying, my impression is your view is that you're not opposed to change, you just want to make sure it's justified and it's the right change.

Mr Gullins: Absolutely.

**Mr Wildman:** Okay. So when you say, "(g) Slashand-burn policies may make the accountants happy but their perspectives do not allow for innovation and imagination," could you expand on that and explain what you meant by artificial deadlines in answer to my colleague's question?

Mr Gullins: Artificial deadlines would be comments we've heard in the media. I haven't had personal conversations with those involved who have made the statements but my impression is that we're preparing to come into the new millennium. Dates are artificial; they're strictly numbers, nothing else. To give this perception that there's something magnificent in the offing and we have to prepare ourselves for it — we're saying that this should be an ongoing process. Going into the next century is irrelevant. Getting the best for your dollar should always be a consideration and to put a deadline on it — no, we don't think that's —

Mr Wildman: You understand that the government has decided that this must be in place by January 1, 1998, when, if it had wanted to, it could have waited until the

next municipal election, for instance, and had it done right.

Mr Gullins: Yes. That's what we were insisting really should have happened. We can't see why the artificial deadline. Even if the changes are implemented — in the government's defence, we can see the argument — things aren't going to die or change tomorrow. Conversely, if this process were stretched out so that it was explained better to the public, then that would be a better approach than to rush into it. As we say, this war, this Gulf war, could turn into the charge of the light brigade. It could turn out to be a disaster, and the scary part is that the government is not coming back with assurances that this will not happen.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Gullins, for appearing before us this morning and for your very thoughtful comments on behalf of your association.

Mr Duncan: We'd like to put specifically to the ministry a request to provide the opposition with the statistics that Mr Carroll has used, plus an analysis of those statistics, specifically the comparison of tax increases and school board expenditure increases versus enrolment increases and how those numbers were arrived at. It would be useful if we could have those before the next set of hearings.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): Is someone from the ministry here? Do you have those?

Ms Susan Pekilis: I can get those. I think they were in the press release.

Mr Duncan: Could we get the breakdown and the analysis of how those numbers were arrived at?

The Chair: Excuse me. If the person from the ministry is going to address us, you should come to the mike so that we can all hear what you have to say and it's on the record. Would you introduce yourself, please.

Ms Pekilis: I'm Susan Pekilis from the Ministry of

Education and Training. Your question was?

Mr Duncan: I requested the government's analysis. Mr Carroll indicated that there's been an enrolment increase of 16%, a tax increase of 120%. We would like the ministry's analysis, how they came up with those numbers, what went into those numbers, so that we can have access to the same information and make that information available to the public for scrutiny.

The Chair: Are you prepared to respond to that now? Ms Pekilis: No.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Madam Chair: I would like to know when we will be dealing — and I'm not saying we have to deal with it now — with the report of the subcommittee. Subsequent to that, I would also like to know what we've done about requests to the ministry to bring forward the information to make a presentation on the proposals for the new formula for determining the per pupil grants, which we asked for vesterday.

The Chair: With respect to your first point, you have a subcommittee report in front of you. It's for information, a memo, because the subcommittee was given authority to deal with scheduling. However, if you wish

to revisit -

Mr Wildman: No, but there is in the subcommittee report a motion that was passed by the subcommittee requesting an extension of the hearings because we have over 1,000 people who have indicated they want to present and we don't have nearly the time under the time allocation motion that was passed by the government. The subcommittee has passed a motion and I would hope the full committee would support the motion to extend the hearings and to request the government House leader to amend the time allocation motion to give more people an opportunity to make presentations to this committee on Bill 104.

The Chair: I misunderstood you. The subcommittee report is for information. We do have the text of a motion which will be put to the committee — and we can put it to the committee now — to deal with that.

Mr Wildman: Whenever you like. I just was wonder-

ing when it would be, that's all.

Mr Skarica: Why don't we do it? I would suggest — The Chair: We can do it now or we can do it at the recess at noon.

Mrs McLeod: There's another issue that we raised at the subcommittee.

The Chair: Could we deal with this issue first?

Mrs McLeod: I was just going to say that there is another issue. My preference would be to ask the committee not to take away from hearing time in order to discuss the procedural issues.

Mr Wildman: I agree with that.

The Chair: Is there consensus with respect to that?

Mrs McLeod: Perhaps the subcommittee could meet at noon to determine what is coming back to the committee.

The Chair: If that's agreeable to the subcommittee and to the general committee, we'll move on then.

Mr Wildman: We'll deal with that at recess.

The Chair: Terrific.

#### ORDE STREET PARENTS' COUNCIL.

The Chair: Our next presenter is from Orde Street Parents' Council; Ms Karen Goldenthal, president. Welcome. Thank you very much for joining us. Your child is quite free to come up if he wishes. We've had children up before and they're always welcome. After all, it's about their future.

Ms Karen Goldenthal: That's right. Dear members of the standing committee, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Karen Goldenthal. I am coming to speak to you today as president, Orde Street Parents' Council. This is my lovely son, Justin Goldenthal-Walters. Justin is a very bright young man, as are all our children the future of tomorrow.

The Orde Street Parents' Council has been and continues to be a dynamic force advocating for a transformative, innovative and historically significant education system for the 21st century. Indeed, the Orde Street Public School community has received much attention, recognition and accolades in terms of the history and hard work done by countless parents, a dedicated professional staff and administration, professional support staff and a supportive network inclusive of many community activ-

ists, and full-time elected trustees with jurisdiction over (the small community that we are.

The Orde Street Parents' Council represents a school community comprising 450 children and their parents, a school population comprising 40 different countries and, linguistically speaking, from a background of over 38 different languages. Our location as an inner-city school close to the government, hospitals and other research arenas means that we need to respond to the international and diverse community this represents. In the light of, and because of, this diverse community, the Orde Street Parents' Council continues this long history today by responding to the standing committee on social development and the hearings into Bill 104.

The province of Ontario has a long history of recognizing the goal of excellence in our education system. Indeed, from Mr William Davis through Mr David Peterson and Mr Bob Rae there has been a series of formative steps forward, providing a strong foundational

framework towards this goal of excellence.

From the 1960s on a strong move forward advocating excellence has given an impetus towards our publicly funded school system. A focus was constructed emphasizing this, as it encouraged students to stay longer in the school system and seek higher levels of education. The Royal Commission on Learning in 1995 mandated a strong motivational force forward. Moreover, the royal commission advocated early childhood education as a prima facie concern and further linked such head-start moves juxtaposed with the removal of grade 13.

Yet this government's legislation and accompanying educational reforms appear to posit the opposite direction: removing the strength of early childhood education, removing grade 13 and compressing, reducing and eliminating much skills development. The Orde Street Parents' Council is shocked at the dismissal of so much evidence to the contrary. For every \$1 spent in early childhood education, at least \$7 will be saved later. Even as we absorb the ignorance of this data, we are at least as shocked by the myriad of exit doors, the reduction of class hours, the reduction and elimination suggested for English literacy hours and other such shortsighted goals.

Bill 104 merely extends this ignorance vis-à-vis removing local control over local schools. The Toronto Board of Education has maintained the highest academic standards as it responds in concrete partnership, with the highest accountability, with the parents and responding with the best educational programs and professional teachers.

teachers

The Orde Street Parents' Council believes strongly in the development of our children with an overall sense of wellness, with professional guidance counsellors who support this effort and with opportunity, equity and respect for a higher, broad-based flexible education and a well-rounded sense of teamwork, diversity and problemsolving skills. It appears this government suggests the counterproposal of students at early ages boxed in, grouped and streamed into exit doors, with no flexibility, no teamwork, no problem-solving and low levels of literacy and language art skills development. We believe this province should not waste the many dollars of investment

paid into the goal of higher education, but rather give

respect to the work already performed.

Indeed, the future depends on this and on not dismissing the efforts and the rewards already evident. The Orde Street Parents' Council fully expects all government bodies to have as their starting point respect for all its citizens and respect for all the work the generations have put forth for us today. Let's build on the greatness of our education system. Our children's lives are the testament to this project. We only hope that this government can be so humble and astute as to cherish the same goal.

The Orde Street Parents' Council has been and continues to be an integral force in educational issues and curriculum development. Child development, pedagogical construction, child psychological and social equity concerns have guided the parents' priorities. It is in this light that we have several concerns to bring to this govern-

ment's attention at the hearings today.

Any change in the overall program of development, professional teachers and support systems, administrative levels and the jurisdiction over trustees and how they are represented, any change in curriculum, course content and number of subject areas, as well as school institutional changes, must be built within the dynamics and parameters of the children's psychological sense of wellness, human development and ethical adult achievement.

Recognition of literacy, high levels of knowledge and broad-based fields of enterprise and the abilities of team efforts, flexibility and problem-solving skills must be paramount. The dynamics of change demand this goal of higher, yet broad-based, education with strong partnerships between parents, teachers, full-time elected trustees and professionally designed administrative systems and professional support systems.

0930

I want to discuss now some of the programming we've had which has made Orde Street such a wonderful school. To reflect the needs of our diverse community we have successfully implemented English as a language, international languages, French immersion, the black cultural program, reading clinics, music, physical education and professionally taught library services.

There is also a wide range of professional support systems in terms of psychological and sociological supports. Any types of learning disabilities are taught by professional teachers. We also have fully developed, professionally taught junior and senior kindergartens with connected day care services, which are very important to early

childhood education.

Orde Street Public School has a language-based focus and this has contributed to our academic excellence. Moreover, we believe that language development is the basis of our children's education and preparing them successfully for their adult achievement for the 21st century information age.

With dependence on the province's grants to maintain such necessary programs, which seems to be at the foot of Bill 104, we insist on sufficient grant structure to

ensure this professional basis.

Parental involvement: To encourage and maintain parental involvement it has been understood as important to work in partnership with the full-time elected trustees

over our little community and the administrative support of the Toronto Board of Education. The only way to encourage and maintain parental involvement in our school system is by having a concrete infrastructure. Thus, the Orde Street Parents' Council insists on this integrative partnership: the Toronto Board of Education and the parents working together collectively with the goal of our children's education in mind.

Without the Toronto Board of Education as a concrete reality and not a superficial cliché, we could not have the very strong parental participation we now have. Further, we are able to have strong local control and accountability in concrete form vis-à-vis the full-time elected trustees and support infrastructure. This will not happen

with Bill 104 in place.

Parents are concerned with the lack of support, involvement and maintenance of our participation and input with the proposed lack of full-time elected trustees. If the government believes in parental involvement, local democracy and accountability, it will not destroy a system that is so successful now.

Let's build our future together, respecting our commonality and diversity. We need to move away from this divisive philosophical position of the government.

What do we need? We need to build strong communities with democratically elected full-time trustees to respond to the diversity of each community's needs. This debate about downward equalization to the floor is nonsense, not common sense. Toronto is the best city in the world. Let's not try to work towards a Third World level.

We have a long history of academic excellence. We need to build together, not apart. Each community must work with partnerships between democratically elected full-time trustees, concrete infrastructures of support and committed parental involvement. The way to the future is in consensus, not divisive debate. Please, leave our excellent schools, our concrete support systems and our excellent local program needs in place.

In conclusion, we need to work together to problemsolve. Let's stay away from larger classrooms and divisive debate about how Toronto's excellence should be cut. We have an excellent public school system. Our children will be watching what you are doing, and Justin

is a witness here today.

As the United Nations convention on children's rights makes clear, the world's resources should go first to the children. This statement does not mean after the tax cut to the wealthy; it does not mean a two-tier education system; it does not mean that the government should please every business or its own caviare interests first.

The Orde Street Parents' Council demands that the UN charter be respected: The children come first. We demand that our excellent Toronto Board of Education and public school system be maintained. We demand that our professionally taught, needs-based programs be kept.

The Orde Street Public School's logo, which I'm wearing here today, represents a multicultural, multiracial, multilingual population. The Orde Street Parents' Council is a strong partnership, with a constitution that reflects our parental philosophy and goals.

Before I close, my son is going to read something after me, but I just want to say in closing that we invite you to come to Orde Street Parents' Council, come over to Orde Street Public School, 18 Orde Street, any time — you are welcome visitors — to witness for yourselves a wonderful population of children, parents, administration, professional teachers and the best support base anywhere: the Toronto Board of Education with its full-time elected trustees over our little community. Thank you for your time.

My son wants to read out something.

Mr Justin Goldenthal-Walters: Like Taking Money From Children: In a classroom of more than 20 and sometimes up to 30-plus children, there is only one thing that can hold their excellent learning abilities to make them go higher in life: cutbacks to education, which will take away classroom books, classroom paper, notebooks, math skills, special education provided for people with learning disabilities, French immersion for people like me who are speaking four different languages, pencils, and the teachers most importantly. PS: Keep grade 13 and learn.

Applause.

The Chair: I must insist there will be no clapping or any other demonstration. Thank you very much, Justin.

Mr Wildman: I can clap.

The Chair: Mr Wildman, I'd seek your assistance in this.

Mr Wildman: I can clap.

The Chair: I know you can, but I'd seek your assistance nevertheless.

Mr Skarica: Ma'am, you say that you want to keep your excellent trustees, and I'm not meaning to be critical of them as individuals, but where I come from, our trustees are paid \$14,000. I think yours are paid \$49,000. My board has no debt of any kind for liability for teachers' pensions. When they retire, they get a retirement gratuity. In Toronto, the unfunded liability is \$100 million. How do you account for that? They're full-time and mine are part-time at \$14,000.

Ms Goldenthal: I want to tell you a story, and it may not be what you want to hear, I'm afraid. The reason I found out about Orde Street school as a new mother in the area, when I moved to where I live now, is that I spoke to my full-time trustees with their \$49,000 salary and whatever the difference is between liabilities etc. I

told them what I wanted for my son.

I said I wanted him to be in a multilingual community; I wanted him to learn languages. I felt that language development was the beginning of a communication skills development which would help him in his adult life. I told them that Justin comes from a half-black background and I wanted that respected. I told them that I wanted a high academic program, focusing on sciences and math and good reading skills. I told them that I wanted him to have a school that really cherished children and had good, meaningful parental involvement and good structures in place, and I'll tell you what the answer was: Orde Street Public School.

I'm telling you Justin's in grade 4, excelling tremendously, and I can only say it's thanks to my trustees. I tell everybody that story because it happens to be true. If I hadn't talked to my trustees, I might have had a differ-

ent experience, but I was very fortunate to have trustees who cared and gave me the exact answer I needed.

As my colleague Edith, who works with me at the school, tells me, it's the parental involvement, the partnership. It's the partnership that grows from having full-time trustees who care, who spend their whole time caring and building the structures. Parental involvement will not happen unless you have good infrastructure.

I can tell you that I work in volunteer activities in many other areas. You know what volunteering is; it comes and it goes, it goes up and it goes down. Parents are struggling, as all of us are in his society. What we need are good full-time trustees who spend their time looking at the programs, checking the schools, making sure the curriculum is well developed and participating fully with the parents. They build the structures that make parental involvement a reality.

0940

Mrs McLeod: It was just suggested to me by my colleague that we might use our time to ask for some clarification or make some clarification on the record about the attempts by the government to paint trustees as being highly irresponsible. I think that does require some clarification, particularly as Mr Skarica talks about unfunded liabilities for retirement gratuities. It should be made quite clear that in any actuarial accounting of unfunded liabilities, the figure that you're using, I would suspect in any given board — and I think you're using a Metrowide figure when you use that figure in Toronto — is based on the scenario if everybody who was eligible to retire went at one time.

Mr Wildman: That's exactly right, if everybody retired at once.

Ms Goldenthal: I think it is this denigrating attitude towards trustees which is really despicable because it's like the whole denigration of education in general. Education is an excellent system here in Ontario because we work towards that goal together, because we've been working in partnership, because parents have been able to access information and have input into policymaking. At Orde Street we have complete decision-making, along with the school body and the trustees, around the policies and the curriculum of the school. I think that's just great.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much for your presentation. I share your concern that any change that's premised upon having to discredit the people involved in the system in order to defend the change is questionable.

Ms Goldenthal: I agree. I think our school system is the best in the world and we need to really celebrate it.

Mr Wildman: I want to thank you for your presentation and thank you, Justin, for your presentation. I have one question. Obviously, you've discussed a very strong partnership among full-time trustees, administration, teachers, parents and students, which really involves everybody in the school. You made one comment, that you hoped that this Bill 104 was not an attempt to cut Toronto's excellence. Do you think that excellence you've described could be maintained if you had parttime trustees responsible for 14,000 students rather than the 4,000 or 5,000 they are now responsible for?

Ms Goldenthal: I have no doubt it could not.

Mr Wildman: Why?

Ms Goldenthal: Because it takes a full-time partnership each and every day, just as we are parents each and every day. We are full-time parents 24 hours a day and we need that full-time infrastructure, we need that fulltime partnership each and every day. We have to have custodians looking after our school system, looking after our children, looking at what's going on each and every day. The fact that the trustees come and visit the schools and come into the classrooms, do you think that will happen with a population that great?

Mr Wildman: The problem we have is that many other parts of the province do indeed have part-time trustees who don't have the full time to spend to go to visit the schools and be involved in the schools in that way. I guess the suggestion that is being made is if they aren't full-time and involved the way they are here in other parts of the province, why should they be here?

Ms Goldenthal: I feel sad and it really hurts my heart to think of anywhere in Ontario that they don't have what we have, because I think everybody should have that kind of full-time commitment. I can't speak for the parents in those communities — they need to speak for their own interests and what they want for their children — but I wouldn't want any less for my son, and I can't see how anybody living in Ontario today could want any less.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Goldenthal, and especially thanks to you, Justin. I hope you continue to do well in school.

#### ONTARIO SEPARATE SCHOOL TRUSTEES' ASSOCIATION

The Chair: Our next presenter, speaking of trustees, is the Ontario Separate School Trustees' Association, Mr Patrick Daly, Welcome.

Mr Patrick Daly: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Regis O'Connor is the first vice-president of our association and a trustee for the Sault Ste Marie Roman Catholic Separate School Board. Patrick Slack is the executive director of our association. Monsignor Dennis Murphy is the director of Catholic education for our association. Earle McCabe is the deputy executive director of our association.

Founded in 1930, the Ontario Separate School Trustees' Association, OSSTA, represents 53 Catholic school boards. Collectively, these school boards educate over 600,000 students from junior kindergarten to grade 12/OAC.

The mission of all Catholic school boards and their schools is to create a faith community that integrates religious instruction, religious practice, value formation and faith development into every area of the curriculum. In Ontario, Catholic school boards provide this education according to the constitutionally determined rights of Roman Catholic parents. We appreciate the opportunity to present this brief to the standing committee on social development.

Our association has been accurately reported as having mixed feelings about the Fewer School Boards Act. According to Catholic philosophy, parents are the primary educators of their children. They entrust the education of their children to trustees who share their vision of faith

and life. To substantially reduce the number of boards and trustees, therefore, is to negatively impact this relationship.

On the other hand, however, implicit in the government's restructuring plans is the assurance of fair and equitable funding for all children. We await the legislation for education finance reform which will redress the inequities occasioned by rich and poor boards, inequities which have been substantiated in commission after commission and in report after report for the past 20 years.

Before dealing directly with the proposed legislation, we wish to situate it within the restructuring of education of which this bill is only a part. The legislative enactments of Bill 104 will improve Ontario's education system only if they are accompanied by legislation which assures equitable and improved educational opportunity for all children in the province, ensures respect and justice for all those who provide education and guarantees the constitutionally protected rights of our Catholic education system.

Bill 104 in its substance and in its details, therefore, will result in better education only on condition that:

(1) The government at the same time implement its promised new fair funding model which will achieve equal educational opportunity for all children. The government has realized that nothing short of a new fair funding model will ensure a quality of educational opportunity for all the children of Ontario, and they have our total support in this direction. It is in recognition of this promise of equity of educational funding that Catholic boards have understood the benefit to children of holding in abeyance and not exercise of this right, however, we have insisted that the designation of taxes must continue through the process of enumeration.

(2) Any employees of schools boards who are affected by the reduction of the number of school boards be dealt with according to clearly defined principles of social justice. Every effort must be made on all of our parts to use attrition, redeployment or retirement programs to meet the needs of these employees.

(3) The teachers employed in Catholic schools be represented by a Catholic teachers' federation. The partnership in Catholic education exercised together by Catholic teachers and trustees is based on a distinctive educational mission with particular goals and objectives. OSSTA sees this as part of the constitutional entitlement given to Roman Catholic separate school boards. The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association has been that teachers' federation for over 50 years.

(4) The new funding allocation formula allow local autonomy through flexibility for discretionary spending by Catholic boards in order that they maintain, foster and develop that specific and distinctive education offered by Catholic schools. This will permit the development of distinctive curricular materials and professional development programs. Given our educational foundation of cooperation between family, school and church, it will also allow Catholic school boards to develop those kinds of intermediary structures which will shorten the obvious geographic and psychological distances between parents,

parishes, schools and trustees, which will result from fewer school boards.

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I would like to highlight the recommendations that we think are important that we present related to Bill 104.

First, relating to constitutional rights, our association is pleased to note the government's continued commitment to constitutional rights that is reflected in the proposed revision to section 1(4) of the Education Act.

Although not intended, the proposed wording of section 1(4) in Bill 104 might imply an intention to back away from existing rights and privileges. We therefore strongly recommend that the words underlined at the bottom of page 4 be inserted at the appropriate spot in section 1(4) by amendment. I'll just read the section that we are recommending be added: "including rights and privileges as they were enjoyed by the separate school boards or their supporters under predecessors of this act as they existed immediately prior to January 13, 1997."

Relating to school board amalgamations, there are certain principles which should be observed in setting the boundaries of new district public and separate school boards, and we go on at length on pages 5 and 6 to

outline those principles.

Just to outline them briefly, the first is that the amalgamation of school boards recognize existing community affinities. Among such affinities, geography and distance must obviously be taken into account as well as economic affinities and affinities determined by culture, history,

faith and religious denominations.

The second principle is that the size of school boards should permit effective administration and cost efficiencies in the delivery of educational services. We are therefore concerned that some of the district school boards proposed, particularly in the north, are simply too large geographically. We therefore recommend that the government consider carefully the submission of local communities on the appropriate units of administration and make changes where necessary.

Bill 104 sets the legislative framework for the establishment of French-language separate and public district school boards throughout Ontario. The Ontario Separate School Trustees' Association unequivocally supports this initiative and has long advocated French-language boards as an appropriate way to reconcile minority-language

education rights.

The vast majority of francophone students are educated in Roman Catholic separate school boards and will shortly make their way to the newly created French-

language Roman Catholic boards.

Our association is committed to ensuring that the process of disengagement will be as efficient and amicable as possible, and we pledge to work with our sister associations in the francophone community to develop a process designed to secure this result.

An important issue that we wanted to speak to was the number of trustees on the newly created district boards. We are pleased that the government recognizes the importance of school boards and trustees in the legislation. It must not, however, forget that there are critical issues to consider when determining the number of trustees on each district board.

The bill, as you know, proposes as few as five trustees. It is our strong view that this is inadequate. The district school board, as a corporate body, must have adequate numbers to ensure that decisions on policy are made with a full appreciation of the many diverse needs of a school board community.

As well, the board must be representative of the community it serves. Geography, distance, urban density and rural sparsity are important factors that must be considered when determining the numbers of trustees. A model that operates on a pure representation-by-population basis will not permit trustees and boards to effectively service their community.

We therefore respectfully recommend that the minimum number of trustees be increased to seven and that the formula for determining the number of trustees on a district board include factors such as geography, urban

density and rural sparsity.

The final issue we wanted to speak to was the creation of the Education Improvement Commission. We recognize the establishment of the commission and its need to regulate and monitor the transition to the new governance model and to study some very difficult issues which will arise.

We expect the interests of French and English Roman Catholic boards to be respected and therefore recommend that the four publicly funded educational communities described in the act be given equal representation on the commission and further that such representation be extended to other bodies dealing with governance which are created by the commission.

Finally, related to the powers of the commission, you'll note that no criteria have been set out in the act regarding the exercise of the authority of the commission. We recommend in that regard that cabinet be given power to make regulations imposing fair and non-discriminatory criteria on the exercise of the commission's approving and amending jurisdiction over school board budgets.

We further recommend that section 344(2) be given further explanation. It states that "decisions of the commission are final and shall not be reviewed or be questioned by a court." It must be clear that any application to the courts is still available in circumstances where the decision of the commission is clearly unreasonable or unfair. We assume there is no intention to give the commission authority to interfere directly or indirectly in denominational or linguistic issues as part of the budget approval process. If the commission takes such action, it will be opposed.

In conclusion, we began this brief by saying there is much in the government's overall education program that OSSTA supports. Our support is based upon the premise that a respect for the constitutional rights of Catholic schools will be maintained, that equity of funding will be achieved and that social justice principles will be applied to those dislocated or displaced by this legislation.

The bill raises many issues on which OSSTA will make particular recommendations to the Education Improvement Commission. We thought it prudent to express our major concerns to you at this time and we thank you for allowing us the opportunity to present our views to you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Daly. You have regrettably used up all of your 15 minutes. We want to thank you and your co-presenters for being here this morning and for making some worthwhile comments.

## ONTARIO PUBLIC SUPERVISORY OFFICIALS' ASSOCIATION

The Chair: Our next presenters are the Ontario Public Supervisory Officials' Association, Mr Grant Yeo. Welcome, Mr Yeo. It's good to see you again. I believe you know the rules. I might ask you to present your copresenter.

Mr Grant Yeo: We thank you for allowing us to speak to you today. On my right is Rae Stoness, the executive director of OPSOA. I'm Grant Yeo. My name is spelled incorrectly. When you have a name with three letters, you're very sensitive as to how they're put in order. I'm president of OPSOA and the director of the Durham Board of Education.

As a way of introduction to our organization, I'll make some comments and then get into the position paper that you have in front of you. The Ontario Public Supervisory Officials' Association represents public supervisory officers, those being superintendents, academic and business, directors of education and education officers across the province. That group numbers approximately 600. It's the largest of the three supervisory officer organizations in the province and we have strong ties with the other two.

Since 1991, there has been a reduction in those numbers of approximately 20%, going from just around 1,000 supervisory officers to less than 800. That has occurred through attrition management as school boards have responded to increasingly difficult financial constraints.

School boards have relied on SOs to provide senior executive leadership in management of the system and we have basically two responsibilities. The Education Act and regulations place the accountability for the implementation of the Ministry of Education and Training's legislative, regulatory and policy framework in the hands of qualified supervisory officers. The implementation of local school board policy is also a legislated responsibility for the supervisory official. In the private sector, the SO would be the president or vice-president of the company, and in many of our communities, as it was in Lambton when I was there as director, the school board is the largest employer.

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We are, by and large, educators — I say "by and large" because our group does include business officials — who have managed many changes throughout our careers. A personal example: I've had the opportunity to teach at three levels — university, secondary and elementary — in two provinces and now in three school boards in Ontario. Supervisory officers have been recognized within boards and throughout the province as the educational leaders. It's within that framework that we present the following position paper that you have. I'm going to review some of it and then ask my colleague to continue.

In front of you is a document entitled Goals for an Effective Transition: The OPSOA Position. The members

of the Ontario Public Supervisory Officials' Association, OPSOA, will provide the necessary leadership in the school boards of the province to implement an effective transition to the newly designated district school boards established for January 1998.

The government of Ontario contends that it intends that the implementation of the act and other curriculum, governance and funding initiatives will achieve certain results. The minister has made it clear to us that this is one piece of legislation, and we look forward to the funding allocation to do that analysis. OPSOA believes that the school boards of this province are committed to continue the implementation of improvements to achieve similar outcomes.

These expectations have long been valued in the educational community and staff in school systems have been committed to their achievement. These include effective learning opportunities for students, recognition of accountability and affordability requirements, active community involvement and interaction, effective governance models, maximum use of available resources, additional value through new ways of using assets and increased value through combining organizational capabilities, skills and knowledge.

OPSOA believes its members are in a position to ensure during these transition processes that the best interests of the students in this province are well served. The complexities of amalgamating school systems whose cultures and practices each are unique in a way that emphasizes student interests as a primary objective is a task best led by the supervisory officials in this province. Coordinating the interests of parents, trustees, government and the broader community is an essential component of the transition processes. Involving an interest from the corporate and business communities, both locally and provincially, must be included in these processes. OPSOA believes that its members have the requisite leadership skills to implement a successful, effective and costefficient transition. To ensure the continued achievements of these goals requires the leadership of the supervisory officials.

At this point, I'd like to introduce again my colleague, Rae Stoness.

Mr Rae Stoness: I'd like to dwell a bit on the Education Improvement Commission and some concern we have with regard to the unfettered powers it would seem to have in the proposed legislation. If this is to be maintained when the act is actually passed, then we suggest there are certain principles that must guide the restricturing and the transition with respect to processes and decisions. Those guiding principles may need to be placed in either legislation or regulation as the mandate for the Education Improvement Commission.

On the overside of the paper that Grant has just presented to you, we present those principles for your consideration and suggest that these are integral to any success that may lead to an effective transition over the next few months and couple of years:

Leaders must strive to protect program integrity for students in the classrooms.

People must be viewed as the strength of the organization.

Local, rather than provincial, processes and decisions must be encouraged.

We believe informed, clear and concise communica-

tions must be part of the process.

There are recommendations and decisions, all of which must be carefully assessed against the legal parameters not only of this bill but of all of the Education Act, its regulations and other applicable government legislation.

Where legislative changes are implemented, they must be applied impartially to roles and responsibilities of those who are charged with the requirement to administer and to operate the school systems of this province.

We believe that supervisory officers must provide local transition committees with the assistance to effectively

assist their mandate.

As all functions of school systems are merged into new school districts, decisions for new practices must reflect a careful analysis of all the costs and all the benefits that will accrue.

Decisions must be implemented in an expeditious manner.

Best and exemplary practices must be recognized and implemented.

Flexibility and uniqueness of programs must be valued. We believe those to be crucial to the transition process and its effectiveness or success over the next months.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Stoness. We have just under two minutes per caucus and we begin

with the official opposition, Ms McLeod. Mrs McLeod: I note the concerns that you have. I don't think you're looking forward to the funding formula. I'm not sure any of us are going to welcome it

when it arrives, given levels of funding that we might expect.

I also want to focus on your concerns with the transitional period and the powers of the EIC, and in particular one issue. We've just received a copy of a memorandum that I believe all boards would have received from Mariette Carrier-Fraser. It sets out the terms and conditions under which the new school announcements can

proceed.

Of course, you'll remember the Minister of Education had a flurry of good-news announcements that were welcomed by school boards in taking the freeze off capital constructions and approving a number of new capital projects. It appears from this memo that boards are expected to fund their share of the capital costs out of their 1997 budgets, which as I understand it would not have been expected, and in any event the budget has to be approved by the EIC, which is not yet in place. Second, the legislation makes it clear, and this memo reinforces it, that you cannot enter into a contract worth more than \$50,000, at least without the approval of the EIC.

I guess I'm wondering — take that one example of the powers that are given to this commission — whether that is creating absolute chaos in proceeding with capital construction plans and whether it makes a sheer mockery out of the minister's announcements of taking the freeze

off capital construction.

Mr Yeo: It is creating some confusion and some difficulty. As late as Friday in a directors' meeting we asked for clarification to determine what that actually meant, because it appears to be saying one thing in one paragraph and another in another.

Mrs McLeod: I'm glad I'm not the only one who read it that way.

Mr Yeo: We are seeking clarity. It differs across the province in terms of the capital allocations and the local share that needs to be put into place so that goes forward.

Certainly, the timing of the EIC and the approval of the budget is a major issue right now as boards are working through their budget process. That too is something we need to get on with. But that memo caused us to ask a great number of questions.

Mrs McLeod: Are there answers? When do you expect the answers to be forthcoming, or will there be no

answers until the EIC is in place?

Mr Yeo: We've gone back to the author of the memo to try and get clarification there, but it may well be when the EIC is in place.

The Chair: Mr Wildman for the third party.

Mr Wildman: Just before I ask my question, I would like to indicate that I would hope we could invite Ms Carrier-Fraser to the committee to explain the memo to the committee.

The Chair: All right. So noted.

1010

Mr Wildman: I also read it to understand that whatever moneys you can't fund in 1997 you'll fund out of the new boards' operating funds in 1998, which is

certainly not a capital expenditure approval.

I'd just like to ask you, as supervisory officers, about the timing and the length of time being given to work out all of these new arrangements for new amalgamated boards. In British Columbia, for instance, when there was an amalgamation of far fewer boards, they took about three years to achieve the completion of the project, which entails merging of collective agreements, some of which are very different — different levels of pay, different benefits — merging seniority lists, which can be quite complex, dealing with early retirements, those kinds of things. Do you think it is practicable to do this on this scale in a few months between now and January 1, 1998?

Mr Yeo: The situation is a difficult one and it varies across the province. In my situation, I don't have an amalgamated setting, so I'd listen to my colleagues who've been encouraged by the ministry and the trustees to begin to work in planning sessions, to work out the information that would need to be put together to make

decisions relative to amalgamation.

However, their frustration as supervisory officers entrusted with this task of planning is, who do they involve, who is the local EIC and are they to go ahead and to make some initial statements and try and work out some of the problems in a very short time when they don't know who the EIC committee will be? So there is a level of frustration currently existing in trying to wrestle with some of the cultures and the different programs and services at a level of providing information that can be compared when the total group, the local committee, is not yet known. It is a difficulty, it is a timing issue, and it is one of the issues we have mentioned in this transition about informed, clear and concise communication. That piece of the puzzle needs to be in place because there is a great deal of work going on right now to try and come to grips with the short time line.

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): Thank you for your presentation this morning. I think, certainly from your comments and based on what I've seen in my own area in London, Middlesex, Elgin and Oxford, supervisory officers have played a very strong leadership role in commencing with the transition process, recognizing some of the concerns you've expressed about detail.

Yesterday, an elected official from the board of education in the city of York concluded that amalgamation would have serious effects on student achievement. Yet when I look at British Columbia, where there is, as Mr Wildman indicated, a 24% reduction in school boards —

Mr Wildman: Three years.

**Mr Smith:** — New Brunswick, 100%; Nova Scotia, 68%; PEI, 40%; Newfoundland, 63%; and Quebec with a proposal for a 56% reduction in school boards — do you come to the same conclusion that student achievement will be compromised, given the activities that have occurred in other provincial jurisdictions across this country?

Mr Yeo: As supervisory officers, we belong to a Canadian association of school officials and we've had that discussion with our colleagues in a number of provinces. The answer is we're going to have to wait to see, because the issue is not only one of quality but what's affordable, and at this point we aren't sure what the cost will be for education. So there are two issues there. For Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and some of the others we have talked to lately, it's a question at this point that can't be answered and it will only be the test of time that tells that. The big portion of it is how it is funded and how those dollars go. As you may be aware, in British Columbia, for certain categories there is a level you can't spend above, and for others there's a level you can't spend above, and there are quotas in between.

**Mr Smith:** In the absence of those details, are you concerned that those jurisdictions have acted prematurely?

Mr Yeo: I'm more concerned with Ontario and the timeliness of how we act. The history of those provinces is such that they may have come to a reformed conclusion based on some other data. With us, it's an issue certainly of accountability and affordability and, as a group of people, we obviously will work towards that. To ask me to predict at this time if the quality is going to be better is beyond my capacity as a director or a supervisory officer.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Yeo and Mr Stoness, for appearing before us this morning and making your presentation and answering questions.

## ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS' FEDERATION

The Chair: The next presenter is the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation, Mr Holmes. Welcome.

**Mr Jeff Holmes:** I would like to introduce the secretary of OPSTF, David Lennox, and the first vice-president of OPSTF, Phyllis Benedict.

The Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation represents 32,000 teachers, occasional teachers and

educational support personnel who work in the public elementary schools of Ontario.

Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, raises serious concerns about the democratic function of school boards and it presents a number of issues which affect our membership deeply.

What teachers, education workers, boards and most particularly the children in the schools of Ontario desperately need is some small sense of stability, and that is clearly missing in the undertaking that's before us.

OPSTF does not have a position against the amalgamation of school boards, but we do question seriously the government's rationale for proposing such a drastic reduction in the number of boards from 129 to 66. The government has stated that part of the aim is to save and the stated amount is a mere \$150 million. I say "mere" because as a proportion of the educational budget it's virtually insignificant. The federation questions whether the upheaval created by such a significant change in the number of boards is worth the relatively minimal financial return

Our organization also questions the viability of some of the boards which have been proposed which cover either large geographic areas or which have extremely large student populations. It's difficult to imagine how boards will be able to meet in the circumstances that will be before them and it is difficult to wonder how the public will have any opportunity to monitor what their elected officials are undertaking.

The central question perhaps is whether the final outcome of board restructuring and education finance reform will have any net benefit to the quality of education.

Bill 104 must also be viewed in the context of the restructuring of provincial and municipal funding. The government has announced its intention to assume most of the responsibility for the funding of education by eliminating the role of residential property tax in paying for public and secondary education. Boards will no longer have the authority to raise revenue in their own jurisdictions and will therefore no longer have the ability to respond to the needs brought forward to them by their jurisdictions.

OPSTF has long advocated for the return of stronger government funding, but we do not support the virtual total provincial control that's being proposed in this bill.

A good example is junior kindergarten, where the government has suggested that junior kindergarten is now optional. It has cut financial support by about 50%; it has eliminated all capital funding for the program. Without the ability to raise funds locally, no board of education can now successfully undertake junior kindergarten.

This government has talked long and loudly about accountability, yet at a stroke they are stripping away the right of Ontarians to hold their school boards accountable for the actions that affect their schools.

1020

OPSTF also does not support the cap on the trustee allowance at \$5,000. The federation does not believe that most trustee salaries across the province are out of line and it is our view that trustee remuneration is left better in the hands of the municipal electors.

Such low compensation will work against having a broad cross-section of individuals from communities to run for the positions of trustees and the resulting boards of education will not in any way reflect their communities. This is particularly true, perhaps, in northern Ontario, for who will either be able to afford or want the position of a school trustee?

With respect to specific provisions of Bill 104, OPSTF has concerns related to a number of issues: the unnecessary infringement on the democratic rights of school board employees: the lack of a general framework for the transfer of those same employees; the extent to which issues related to the operation of school boards are left to regulatory powers of cabinet; and the unfettered powers of the proposed Education Improvement Commission.

In what may be the single most undemocratic feature of this act, Bill 104 stipulates that neither a school board employee nor that employee's spouse may run as a trustee in any school board. I wonder if, by the same token, anyone who has a spouse employed in the public service in the broader public sector in Ontario should be disqualified from the opportunity of running to be an

MPP, because there's a direct analogy.

There are no successor provisions in the legislation which provide for collective agreements and the transfer thereof. It is our position that Bill 104 should be amended to guarantee job protection for existing school board employees. Nor does Bill 104 specifically address issues related to the transfer of school board employees from existing boards to the proposed district boards. which in the majority of cases consist of at least two other boards. This will obviously create situations where employees with different salaries and benefits will be thrust together with no clear indication of the status of their collective agreements.

It is the position of OPSTF that Bill 104 should be amended to clearly recognize the legal status of teacher collective agreements during the transition period, until new collective agreements are negotiated between district

school boards and their employees.

The size of a number of the proposed boards is a second concern. Employees who face involuntary transfer find themselves discomfited indeed. OPSTF believes there should be a legislative protection regarding the maximum distance for involuntary transfer of school board employees. Further, it is the position of the federation that in cases where a board wishes to transfer an employee to a work location beyond the boundaries of an existing board, such transfer should be subject to mutual

I will give you a direct and personal example. My home board of education is Red Lake. I am released by the Red Lake board into this political position I hold. By the time I'm finished this position, so will the Red Lake board be finished. It will now be the Red Lake, Kenora, Fort Frances, Dryden and Atikokan board of education.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): The board of

northwestern Ontario.

Mr Holmes: That's correct. I have a home in Red Lake. I have made a life in Red Lake. It's my intention to return to Red Lake, but I have no clear indication that when this legislation is concluded I will have a job in

Red Lake. Because of my seniority, I fully expect to have a job with the new board of education, but that job may be in Atikokan, it may be in Fort Frances, it may be in Kenora or it may be somewhere other in an area that is now somewhat near the size of France. I do not believe that is a comfortable situation for any employee.

I also draw your attention to the precedents Ontario has used before when a legislative framework has been drawn up in such cases. I simply remind you of what happened in the Kirkland Lake and Timiskaming Roman Catholic separate boards in 1992 and in the annexation that took place in Middlesex by the London board in

1994.

Now to the Education Improvement Commission. The Education Improvement Commission will have an incredibly broad range of authority to identify issues, to make recommendations to the minister, and to exert financial control over existing school boards under the new directions and the new district school boards that are in place. The powers of the commission over the financial operation of school boards will effectively suspend their democratic authority. This government has placed democratically elected boards in de facto receivership. It has abrogated the rights both of trustees and of the citizens who elected them.

The federation is also alarmed that the legislation prescribes the commission's mandate to include conducting research and making recommendations regarding outsourcing of non-instructional services by district school boards. This action supports the blinkered ideologue view that in all cases the rule of the marketplace is superior to all else. What place has this attack on the working people of Ontario in a document entitled the Fewer School Boards Act? The titles of both the act and the Education Improvement Commission are positively Orwellian in the crass manipulation they use of the public.

I want to touch briefly on one human aspect of this before I leave for questions, and that is the schools themselves. What little children desperately need is some sense of security and continuity. What this proposal is bringing forward is the spectre of contracting out. It means that some of the most important people in the lives of the children — the caretakers, the secretaries, the bus drivers — may become simply transients with whom they have no relationship and no ability to identify, and that is a shame. It disrupts the lives of the children in a way that

is totally unnecessary.

In conclusion, Bill 104 is disturbing for the broad range of powers assigned to the cabinet and to the Education Improvement Commission. There are no assurances there will be open and full consultation on any issues related to establishment of district school boards, and the legislation removes a good deal of the accountability from the traditional function of our democratic rights.

I would draw your attention to two pages in our brief. There is a page of recommendations; there are 11 of them there and I have touched on most of them as I spoke. Finally, there is an appendix A which is the principles set out by the Ontario Teachers' Federation, of which we are a part, that have to do with the orderly transition of collective agreements.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Holmes. I'm afraid you've successfully used all your time and there won't be any time for questions and I regret that. Thank you all for coming and making your presentation to the committee.

## EAST YORK BOARD OF EDUCATION; EAST YORK HOME AND SCHOOL COUNCIL

The Chair: Our next presenter is from the East York

Board of Education, Gail Nyberg.

Gail Nyberg: Madam Chair, there's an extra presenter with us today, Laura Dark. I'd just like to take a brief moment to explain why Laura is with us. Laura is the president of East York Home and School Council, and heard from the committee on Friday that there would be no time for this group that represents a great number of parents in East York to present, so we would like to share some part of our time.

The official record does not show Andrew Lamb's position. Andrew Lamb is a student trustee in East York and sits on the board with myself and the other members.

The Chair: Thank you very much and welcome. You have 15 minutes to use as you wish, and if you wish to

share it with Ms Dark that would be fine.

Gail Nyberg: I'm hoping the committee has been passed our brief because the picture of the child on the front is I think what this legislation is not all about. If it was all about this child or the children like that in Ontario, I don't think we'd be sitting here. This legislation and the proposed funding changes are not about this child. It's about taking money out of the public school system, out of the separate system and creating what we call in East York the lowest common denominator education. This is not about pumping more money and higher quality education.

It's also about pitting one area of the province against the other: separate against public, public against French separate, and we're not about that in East York.

1030

We have a study — and it's a lovely little study — done by the government that shows that \$147 million. I wouldn't be sitting here as a chair of a board if the minister would stand up in the House and say, "We're going to do all of this amalgamation, and we're going to save \$147 million, and other than that \$147 million, I commit to leave every other cent in education to be spent for the children of Ontario." That commitment has not been made.

What we have here is the \$1-billion myth. The parents of East York and the parents of this province were successful in putting great political pressure on this government not to take that \$1 billion out. They have to get rid of those boards to take that \$1 billion out.

Is there status quo? Status quo is not a go; I know that, and so do the people at this table. But we also know that radical change made this fast is not for the good. With the board they're going to create in Metropolitan Toronto with 310,000 students, we will look like Detroit very, very quickly.

I will wrap up on behalf of our board, but I want to make sure that everybody has an opportunity to talk. I'm

imploring, at this point: If this government is serious about making good reform, then it will take the time it needs to do it and not six months.

Mr Andrew Lamb: My name is Andrew Lamb. I'm the student trustee. East York students are concerned for the future of the student voice in East York. Right now we're one in 16,000, and with the new legislation we'll be one in 300,000 students. We feel we will be swal-

lowed up and our voice will be lost.

Students in East York feel that many programs we have now are part of the classroom: extracurricular activities, student services, dramatic programs, sports teams; from these four alone I have learned as much, if not more, about myself and about what I want to do and where I want to go in life. Any student in East York, when asked, will tell you the same thing about the programs they've been part of. Students in East York are concerned these will no longer be available for them. These students, and especially myself, feel this would be a huge loss for our future.

The biggest concern of all students across the board in East York is the possibility of a rise in class size. In the past with cuts, we have seen class sizes rise to 35 students, where we are this year. If there are to be more cuts, what will happen to the 34 faces I see when I look around my English writers' craft class? Will this increase

further to 40 or 45?

I'd just like to read briefly from the handout you have in front of you. While Bill 104 does not specifically address the funding model for education in the province of Ontario, students are concerned about the future that this legislation will direct.

Secondly, will the same opportunities, in terms of programming and co-curricular support, still be available to students across the proposed Toronto District Public School Board or will financial imperatives erode future

opportunities for students?

Simply stated, will the students of East York be guaranteed that class sizes will not increase; that the programs and extracurricular activities that we feel are an incredibly important part of our education will not disappear? Most importantly, will the students of East York be guaranteed that their individual voice, which is heard now through me and through the board, which listens, will not be lost or swallowed up in the 300,000-plus students of the new mega-board? In East York, the students do not want to lose their voice or the student positions that now facilitate this inside the school, with the student councils in each of the schools, and outside of our schools.

In conclusion, East York students don't want to move backwards into the future; we instead want to continue to move forwards.

Laura Dark: My name is Laura Dark, and I am president of the East York Home and School Council. Our council represents 16 of the 25 schools in the borough of East York. We have been an active volunteer organization of parents in the community for over 36 years and are one of the largest organizations of our kind in the province. We have over 1,000 members who are activity involved in the daily lives of their local schools, working with classrooms, fund-raising and a myriad of

other activities to enhance the quality of education in East York schools.

Our associations and the home and school council have an extraordinary relationship with the East York Board of Education. We mutually support each other in our goal of achieving the best for each student. Our meetings are always attended by a superintendent and a trustee, and often the chair and the director upon request. We feel this relationship will be impossible under a mega-board. Will the chair of this new board be available to us regularly? Will a trustee representing us be available? We doubt it.

Additionally, the institutional structure of our organization will be lost in an electoral plan which sees our community taken apart and subdivided into small parts of three huge constituencies. We lose our community identity, our contact with the school board made of our neighbours and direct community members, and our institutional framework. From our perspective, it would seem that the process of amalgamation of the municipalities and the school boards is the end of our 36-year-old parent volunteer organization. This is a loss for the students and a loss for the community of East York.

Are we to assume that this standing committee's decision to exclude hundreds of parents is reflective of the government's position on parents volunteering in the education system in Ontario, that is, that you are uninterested in our opinions of our children's education? Let me assure you it is both unfair to students and politically unwise to adopt such a position.

We want both you and the Education Improvement Commission to recognize the following:

Methods must be found to ensure that no existing local volunteer organization be lost in the superbureaucracy of a mega-school board.

This government and the EIC must involve parent groups in the decisions that are going to be made about education in Metro.

The EIC's bottom line should be directed at making the education system a better place for our children to learn. We do not support the EIC in the expedient destruction of our institutions solely in the name of administrative efficiency or cost cutting to facilitate income tax rebates.

It takes many people to make a classroom secure and a positive educational environment. Teacher-librarians, physical education teachers, design and technology instructors, ESL instructors, junior kindergarten, music instructors, computer classes, social support, adult education and caretakers are part of our classrooms, not administrative support services.

The EIC must recognize the special needs of Metro schools and provide a method to involve parents in all proposals for funding and curriculum changes in Metro schools.

In conclusion, the East York Home and School Council does not feel that the amalgamation of the Metro school boards into one board will have a positive impact on the relationship between parent groups and the education system. In particular, the loss to our East York community and the destruction of an active, effective parental involvement process makes no sense at all.

The amalgamation plan and the electoral plan are clearly conceived with no thought to the issues at stake at our local community level, and we urge you to correct this weakness by involving groups like the East York Home and School Council in the process of revisions to Bill 104. Thank you.

Mr Rod Thompson: We felt it important to bring you the perspective from our students, from our board and from our community, and I would like to express to the committee the concerns that our staff have within the Board of Education for the Borough of East York. They are concerns around the uncertainty of the future that the Fewer School Boards Act presents for them. You've heard some of those concerns in a generalized sense from other presentations we heard this morning.

In my 25 years as an employee in this board, it has become evident to me that one of the advantages that we have truly enjoyed in the East York board is the ability to communicate with our employees. That is not just an ability that simply refers to sending memoranda or paperwork or dealing with communications electronically, nor am I simply referring to the ability of our principals, our managers, our supervisory officials to interpret and transmit policy and expectations. I'm talking about open, honest and regular communication that has led in the East York school system to feelings by employees that they are valued in that organization.

It is an organization that has an articulated mission, a common purpose and a commitment to its employees that makes them really want to go the extra mile for the children in their care.

In East York caretakers are not just cleaners. They are guardians of our property, our assets. They take pride in providing welcoming opportunities for our children.

In East York our secretaries don't just prepare copy and answer phones. They take pride in knowing their communities, they take pride in providing emotional support for our children and they take pride in giving parents the comfort of knowing that a key communicator will be in touch with them when that's needed.

In East York our teachers know that children matter. They are committed to student achievement, they strive for excellence and because they're part of an organization which is of a size that can be communicative and responsive, they work as a part of a team to effect a common goal: better outcomes for the children of our community. 1040

Bill 104 proposes to change the dynamic balance that exists between the community's hopes and dreams for its children and the school system's ability to delivery on those hopes and dreams. It leaves a proud community perplexed in the wake of uncertainty about the ability to meet financial goals. It leaves a committed group of dedicated employees frustrated about the future.

We would urge the committee to look very carefully at the implementation of Bill 104. It's our strong recommendation that the transition of existing board structures into the proposed district school board structures be given adequate time so that programs can be harmonized in a manner which will not have a negative impact on students. It's our strong recommendation that as local education improvement committees are established there be significant representation from existing boards so that the insights and the understandings of local issues can be applied in a sensitive manner during the transition period.

In this way the interests of children, of programs and of our staff can be protected. It is our strong recommendation that the implementation of Bill 104 not sacrifice future long-term opportunities for the children of this

province for short-term financial goals.

Gail Nyberg: I would just sum up a little bit by saying, I think all of the presenters have told you how we feel. In East York we care about all kids in Ontario, not just the ones in Metropolitan Toronto. We understand that in Metropolitan Toronto and East York there are some different needs. In no way do we sit here and say that we should have a special deal in Metropolitan Toronto. What we say is that each child in this province has to have an equity of opportunity, and equity doesn't always mean the same amount of money, just like it costs a lot of money to buy a house in Toronto and it doesn't necessarily cost the same amount in Red Lake, and I think you have to look at the same process.

I have nieces and nephews who go to schools across this province. I'm a taxpayer in central Algoma. I have nieces and nephews in London. I have them in Timmins. I have them across the province. I want the same opportunity, but I think when you're looking at a funding model, which this legislation doesn't talk about, that says the same amount of money, you're heading for disaster, so I implore you as a committee to make recommendations that make this bill work in a fair manner for all children for an equity of opportunity.

The Chair: You've used up your 15 minutes. I regret

we can't put any questions to you.

Mrs McLeod: I have a question to place on the record for ministry response. I respect the fact that there were a number of important and legitimate questions raised in the brief, like the guarantee of class sizes and the guarantee of protection of extracurricular activities. I think those questions need to be answered. I know what answer you would get if we placed them on the record. I won't put those on the record for direct ministry response from that commission to the committee, but I do feel the question legitimately related to the bill is, what student representation has been provided for in conceiving of the trustee numbers on the new boards?

Mr Skarica: Again, I don't have the answer to that

question. I take it under advisement.

The Chair: Thank you all for coming and for sharing your thoughts with us.

## YORK REGION ROMAN CATHOLIC SEPARATE SCHOOL BOARD

The Chair: Our next presenter from the York region separate school board is Ms Tina Rotondi Molinari. Thank you very much for being here, Ms Molinari. It's nice to see you again. We'll begin by asking you to present your co-presenter.

Ms Tina Rotondi Molinari: With me today is John Sabo, associate director of corporate services, to assist in answering any questions that the committee might have.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today and to provide you with our views on the changes that will affect education in Ontario.

In my presentation I will be addressing three areas, including the background and history of the York region separate school board, our views on the changes being proposed for education in Ontario and what we believe we can offer this government to ensure a successful transition.

The York Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board educates 44,000 students in 73 schools, employs 3,300 staff and covers 664 square miles of geographic area bounded by Metro on the south, Simcoe on the north, Durham on the east and Dufferin-Peel on the west.

While the majority language section of our board will not be affected by the reduction of the number of school boards, the French-language section will be removed and amalgamated with a much larger French-language separate district school board.

We estimate that the number of trustees on our board will be reduced from 18 to approximately nine, and trustee honorarium will be reduced from \$12,553 per year to \$5,000.

Our board is unique in a number of ways, and our experiences may prove invaluable to the province as it moves forward with its changes to education.

In the mid- to late 1980s we were considered the fastest-growing board in North America. Extensive growth in York region resulted in the need for us to build a large number of schools in a relatively short period of time. Since 1985 our board has completed 49 school construction projects, generating 2.8 million square feet and 31,000 new pupil spaces.

The capital expenditure and debenture debts incurred during this high growth period are still being felt today. We are now carrying an outstanding debenture debt of approximately \$98 million requiring repayment of \$16.5

million annually.

In 1989, due to ongoing financial difficulties caused by high growth and low assessment, we asked for a provincial review of our operations, and as a direct result, in 1990 we were the first school board to undergo a provincial audit. This provincial audit experience proved to be very interesting and beneficial to both parties.

In 1993 another request was made by the board to have our operations reviewed and resulted in the appointment of a provincial review team led by Mr John

Sweeney.

At the end of 1993 we faced an accumulated deficit of \$32 million. To retire our debt we developed, and the province approved, a five-year deficit elimination plan for our board. We are proud to say that we have since turned the ship around and we are well ahead of our original plan to eliminate the deficit by 1998, with now only \$11 million left as of 1996 year-end projections.

Our debt combined with ongoing provincial grant reductions served to increase the discrepancy between what our board can spend on its students and the amount spent by our public school counterparts. Over the past few years we cut a number of programs and services, including over 25% of central office staff.

In 1994-95 an external monitor was assigned to observe our board's operations. In 1994 we established a budget-audit monitoring committee which continues to operate under a mode of monthly reporting and controlling of expenditures. This monthly reporting and external monitoring approach is very similar to what is being recommended in Bill 104 and, as such, our experience in this regard may prove invaluable to the government.

We strongly support the principles in the Ministry of Education and Training's paper titled Meeting Students' Needs, specifically education quality, equity for students and taxpayers, affordability, accountability and responsiveness to local needs. The emphasis to put children first and focus on the classroom is both commendable and appropriate, and in this light we offer our comments and considerations about Bill 104.

I cannot comment on Bill 104 in isolation; it must be taken within the context of other legislative changes that will affect education in Ontario.

Bill 104 clearly demonstrates the government's continued commitment to constitutional protection for Roman Catholic separate school boards and for French-language governance, and for this we thank you.

We also applaud this government for moving ahead in its commitment to repair the current inequitable and unfair funding model. We all know that exhaustive studies have been done that confirm the need for change. Where past provincial governments have long recognized the need, they have been frozen in the consultative process. This government has clearly demonstrated its will to move ahead, and we are hopeful now that you will not be dissuaded by those who are seeking to further delay this process.

We commend this government on its plan to develop a new, fair funding model to ensure a high quality of education that meets all students' individual needs regardless of where they live. As a board which has had to do more with less and experienced severe restraints while still maintaining an excellent education system, we have gained the expertise that could assist in developing a fair funding model and we would be pleased to assist in any way we can in the development of this model.

According to the ministry's own report, A Report on School Board Spending, January 1997, we already spend more in our classrooms and less on administration and supervision than the provincial average. As a government you have challenged school boards to look for innovative ways to make up for budget shortfalls, and we have done just that. Our board is unique as a leader in sharing services with our coterminous board.

Our success in reducing bureaucratic duplication and saving money is unmatched. Our joint student transportation services has already saved York region taxpayers over \$7.5 million in the first two years of operation. In 1994 we established a joint board consortium, with a mandate to identify and recommend the implementation of all non-instructional initiatives where collaboration can lead to cost saving or improved efficiencies.

While other boards in the province have hired external consultants, the success in York region can be directly attributed to the hard work and dedication of the boards'

own staff and trustees. I will leave behind copies of our Leaders in Sharing brochure and a copy of our video, which highlights our joint initiatives for your review.

Our board has explored many alternative revenue-generating ideas, including a pilot project for school bus advertising, and working with private industry to get paper products work books and consumable supplies at no charge. We are on record as supporting the removal of education funding from local taxation and we believe this to be the only way to ensure equal resources per pupil throughout Ontario. We are hopeful that the new model for funding effectively works to the betterment and advancement of the children in our schools by providing them with the same educational dollars available to schools across Ontario.

At York Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board we have always promoted and supported parental involvement, and we commend this government on its commitment to giving parents a greater voice in education through the advisory school councils. We caution, however, that not all school councils are ready to take on additional responsibilities and may be discouraged from participating if there is no clear direction, guidelines or support. This area needs to be approached slowly and cautiously, allowing parents to ease into and become comfortable with the increased role.

The Education Improvement Commission will undoubtedly play a key role in the transition to the new system of education governance in Ontario. Therefore, to ensure the success of the transition, the commission must be represented by all the key stakeholders, including representatives from the separate school boards. While we note that this commission will be approving boards' monthly budgets, there are no criteria as yet set out for the approval of these budgets.

As mentioned previously, our board has an effective monthly budget audit monitoring process, and we offer our assistance to the EIC in developing the criteria for approval. We would like to assist the commission in developing workable, realistic rules and be available to the commission, when formed, to give them the benefit of our experience.

Our board has some serious concerns about the extent of outsourcing non-instructional services that may be recommended by the commission. All school-based staff, although not all work directly with students, have contact with students throughout the school day. Any outsourcing must take into consideration the needs of children and how cuts will affect the education process in the classroom. We would be prepared to work with and make recommendations to the commission on ways of effecting cost savings.

Through our joint board consortium we have implemented many efficiencies in areas of non-instructional services, including our amalgamated courier service, attendance counselling, joint tendering, snowplowing, recycling and waste disposal, and portable relocations. We would be pleased to share our ideas and successes with the commission.

We also ask that a principled approach based on social justice be applied to school board employees who may be terminated as a result of this outsourcing initiative. This approach should include the development of a comprehensive human resources policy that recognizes employee contributions to our school systems.

We support the move of trustees getting out of the taxation business and concentrating on being guardians of education in their communities. We also support the concept of boards focusing on students and devoting efforts to ensuring successful student achievement, but we are unsure of what the government views the role of trustees to be in this regard and we welcome further clarification in the future.

We are concerned about reduction in the number of trustees, which will give taxpayers less access to their representatives and will jeopardize one of the ministry's own belief statements which calls for responsiveness to local needs.

We agree that the trustee role should not be hands-on, day-to-day management; therefore the honorarium should better reflect this reduced role and responsibility. However, where some boards now offer full-time salaries, it must be pointed out that most boards have been reasonable in setting the honoraria. The suggested cap of \$5,000 may limit the interest and ability of some who may truly wish to put in the time to become an informed advocate for their community. The significant reduction in honoraria will in all probability limit the number of individuals competing for trustee positions in the next election, leaving them to some individuals who may not take the responsibility seriously.

Given the government's plans to provide clear prescriptive guidelines for school board operating expenditures, the anticipated changes to collective bargaining and the limited role for trustees, it is unclear why the government foresees the necessity to eliminate trustees who may be school board employees or spouses of school board employees.

In closing, please allow me to reiterate: Exhaustive studies have already been done that have confirmed the need for change. We congratulate this government for moving ahead in its commitment to repair the current inequitable and unfair funding model. Where past provincial governments have long recognized the need for change, they have been frozen in the consultative process. This government has clearly demonstrated its will to move ahead, and we are hopeful that you will not be dissuaded by those who are seeking to further delay the process.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak with you today.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Rotondi Molinari, and Mr Sabo. You've used up the entire 15 minutes, I regret to say, and we will not have time for questions, but we thank you for sharing your thoughts and those of your board with us.

### ONTARIO ENGLISH CATHOLIC TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

The Chair: Our next presenter is from the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, OECTA, provincial office, Ms Rettig. Nice to meet you again.

Ms Marilies Rettig: Thank you.

The Chair: As you settle I'll just review some of the rules with you. You have 15 minutes. We'd appreciate it if you could present your co-presenter and then you may begin your presentation, and hopefully we'll have some time for questions at the end.

Ms Rettig: I would like to preface my presentation by introducing the two people who are sitting here with me. To my right is Marshall Jarvis, first vice-president of our association, and to my left is Claire Ross, general secretary of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association. I would also like to preface my presentation by saying it's certainly a pleasure to be here. I think it's very important that you allow us the opportunity to come and speak to you as members of the educational community and express to you some of the very significant concerns we have with Bill 104.

At the same time as expressing my appreciation for this opportunity, I have to communicate the dismay with which we are presenting, recognizing that we have only 15 minutes to make a presentation on a piece of legislation that does much more than redraw geographical boundaries and does much more than just eliminate a number of trustees from different regions in this province; for indeed this legislation will significantly change social democracy in the province of Ontario as we know it.

Our brief is before you and it contains certainly many of the very significant concerns that we have with respect to Bill 104. I wish to briefly highlight three or four of these for you and then I'll be more than willing to entertain questions, together with Marshall and Claire.

First of all, I'd like to express concern that Bill 104, that's the restructuring of school board structures, is only one piece of a very significant puzzle of educational reform in this province. We have considerable concern as a teachers' organization that educational reform is done in such a piecemeal fashion. Certainly we feel very strongly that reform cannot be well founded, cannot ensure appropriate consultation at the local level and cannot ensure that appropriate impact studies are conducted on the various pieces of reform that will ensure that these reforms are indeed ones that will enhance and improve the education system in Ontario.

One of the first significant problems we highlight in the context of our report to you is concerns relative to the Education Improvement Commission. Precisely, we have significant concerns and grave difficulties with the scope of powers that are currently granted to the EIC. Powers that usurp the authority that is currently given to and entertained by those who were democratically elected and should have maintained that mandate until January 1998 will now be overtaken by a commission that is not democratically elected, that is not reflective of local jurisdictions, but one that is appointed by the government here in Toronto and that will reside almost exclusively in Toronto and make very significant decisions about communities into which they have very little insight.

Second, we raise for you the very grave concerns we have with respect to the impact and infringement upon the constitutional rights that are afforded to the separate school community of Ontario through section 93 of the Constitution. Indeed we have such grave concerns with

respect to the infringement upon constitutional rights that for the first time in our history an open letter was issued to each member of our provincial association to ensure that the 35,000 teachers and members of OECTA in various regions of this province are acutely aware of the threats to the constitutional rights that are currently afforded to the separate school system and indeed of both the short-term and the long-term implications of those kinds of infringements on the rights of separate school boards.

Certainly first and foremost is the right to secure local taxes, the right to access property tax by school boards, and second, the kinds of authorities and decisions that are now lost to locally elected school boards, separate school representatives of the local community, and now are taken on by a commission that usurps that authority.

Very briefly, I reflect upon the situation as it has existed and transpired over the past 30 years in New Brunswick. It was 30 years ago that local boards lost their right to tax, the geography was increased, the number of trustees was decreased and the power and authorities invested in local school boards was also decreased. It took 30 years in New Brunswick for that government to end up eliminating school boards altogether, and the concern we have as separate school teacher representatives is that this will be the same demise that will face all school boards in Ontario and certainly most pointedly the separate school boards in Ontario.

We have within the context of our brief outlined very significant concerns we have with the proposed amalgamation, practical difficulties that arise with respect to amalgamation. I will only highlight one or two and then we will be available for questions that you may have of

First and foremost, concerns with respect to staffing: I must express grave concerns of OECTA relative to the use of outsourcing and the replacement of secretarial staff, custodial staff and other support staff in school boards. We see it as an issue of fundamental social justice that employees, regardless of what capacity they work in in school boards, are not told on one day of the week that they no longer have contracts under which they work and are employed, rather that their services will be outsourced. It has happened in other sectors, and regardless of whether it has happened in the health sector or indeed it will happen in the education sector, we see it as tragic and certainly something that goes against elements of social justice that should be the very nature and substance of the democratic process of this province.

The other concerns we want to express on behalf of our membership across this province are the concerns with respect to teachers and their ongoing work within the context of contracts at the local school level. Certainly it is a position of this association, and we have put it forward as a recommendation, that the EIC should not involve itself in any form or fashion with respect to collective agreements and changes within those collective agreements.

Finally, I want to highlight a few very significant, practical difficulties we see with respect to this legislation and, in doing so, I have to reflect upon the north. I spent the past three weeks travelling throughout the north and

I've spoken with teachers and I've spoken with parents and other community members who are very acutely aware of the negative impacts of a school board that now runs more than 800 kilometres. One only has to go to the north and travel extensively through the north, let alone live in the north, to realize what those implications are for trustee meetings and how they can viably have different meetings, particularly during the winter months.

You look at the communication problems and certainly a pat answer is, "We have technologies and you can use those technologies." Well, not every family in the north has access to a computer. It is true that computer usage, and computers that are owned by families, has risen over 40%, but that has been in the case of upper-income and middle-income families and certainly is not the case with lower-income families.

I would put forward that there are many families in the north, or indeed in other parts of this province, that would not have access to computer technology and therefore would be unable to have any kind of credible input or communication, if indeed technology is now the basis of communication between trustees and representatives of school boards and parents. Moreover, the infrastructure for technology is not there in the north, be it cell phones, be it e-mail, be it computer systems. So one must be very realistic with respect to those realities of the north.

Finally, and I say this critically, I'm a teacher in the east and my new board will be Lanark, Leeds and Grenville, Stormont, Dundas, Glengarry and Prescott-Russell, and I recognize full well that this kind of structure of a school board will not allow for community involvement and input into the schools. The trustee who is elected from Cornwall will not know what happens in Perth and what the schools in Perth will need. They may know a little better than an appointed commission sitting in the Mowat Block in Toronto, but they certainly will not have the kind of expertise and insight into what the schools in Perth will need or the schools in Smiths Falls. If that's true in that jurisdiction in eastern Ontario, it will most certainly be true in jurisdictions in northern Ontario that far surpass that kind of geographical distance.

I will conclude my remarks at this point. Our brief is before you and I urge that each and every one of you who is a member of this committee take time and read this thoroughly and reflect very carefully on the concerns we bring forward. We bring them forward as educational practitioners, as teachers who are before students in the classrooms each and every day, and we do so recognizing the importance not only of the social democratic system that we have, the fact that locally elected trustees are accountable to students, to parents and communities by which they are elected, but also recognizing that the best decision-makers are ones who are locally elected, who know the community and ones who will know those parents and those children within their schools and recognize what the needs are, not only of the children within one specific school and jurisdiction but those within that school board.

I wish to conclude my remarks at this point in time and I certainly would be more than willing to entertain questions, together with Marshall and Claire. Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): Thank you for coming today. I appreciate your comments. I just have one question, and I'll try and give the floor to my colleague here.

We heard from the Ontario Separate School Trustees' Association today and now we're hearing from the Ontario separate school teachers' association, and it would appear to me that some of the things should be common in your approaches since you're both dealing with separate schools.

The trustees suggested today that they were pleased with the government's continued commitment to constitutional rights that's reflected in Bill 104 and you're suggesting that you have a letter, which I guess you haven't passed to us yet, because I don't see it in my package, that we're not standing up for your constitutional rights. Can you explain the difference between the trustees' approach and yours?

Ms Rettig: I would suggest that it's not a matter of any one group's approach. It's a matter of what exists in section 93 of the Constitution and the fact that the auspices contained and directions contained in Bill 104 are an infringement of those rights that are contained therein.

First and foremost, I would speak to the fact that property designation rights for separate school supporters will be suspended. The right of access to local property taxes is outlined within section 93 and is a right that's afforded through the Constitution. It doesn't matter whose interpretation you have as a group, the fact is that the Constitution exists, that is a right contained within the Constitution and that certainly has been suspended for a fixed period of time.

Moreover, in my opening remarks I alluded to the significant concerns we have with the kind of decisions that will be made by the Education Improvement Commission, and that's a group that is appointed by the provincial government. Section 93 states quite clearly that separate school boards are to be governed by those who are elected by members of and accountable to the separate school community jurisdiction in which they are elected.

Those are two examples and certainly I'll be more than willing to provide you with a copy of the open letter. I didn't bring it because it was not part of the brief, but I certainly will make it available to you.

Mrs Johns: I understand that, but the bill does say, "This act does not adversely affect any right or privilege guaranteed by section 93 of the Constitution Act." So it does state that the intent is that as much as we're going to fund in a different way a per pupil basis which in some cases, especially in my riding, is a very good thing for both boards, I think it does say that we are respecting the rights of the separate school, and I would take issue with you in that regard.

Ms Rettig: Just supplementary, it may be well for the government to acknowledge that, but who upholds the Constitution? I suggest it would be a Supreme Court decision and you would go to the Supreme Court of this country to assess if the Constitution indeed has been infringed upon or not.

By virtue of the fact that you are attempting to remove rights of access to local property taxes and usurping

significant authorities and decision-making powers of locally elected separate school trustees, we put forward that we feel that the constitutional guarantee has been infringed upon.

Mrs McLeod: Fifteen minutes is not long enough and there are so many areas that need to be explored, including all of the implications of the role of the trustee being rendered virtually meaningless because they'll have no fiscal flexibility. Somebody referred to it yesterday as "centralized decision-making and decentralized blame."

But let me focus particularly on the constitutional rights question because it does seem to stand out. Let me ask you, first of all, whether you think that having lost the right to tax through the funding piece that's to be the companion to Bill 104, that can ever be reversed.

Ms Rettig: It would be very difficult to see how that kind of reversal would take place, be it in one year or be it in five years. It's quite clear that the area of local property taxes that was once attributed to the educational envelope has now been used, indeed overused, in the area of social services that will now have to be subsidized and provided by local municipalities. It would be difficult to assess at any time when any group goes back and suggests, whether it's one year or five years down the road, that, "Yes, we made a mistake five years ago and we want to ensure that we again have access to property taxes." That access will not be there because the money simply won't be there.

Mrs McLeod: I'm going to ask you for a constitutional opinion. I respect that neither of us are constitutional lawyers, but do you have a sense that it's possible that the constitutional right of Catholic ratepayers to governance could still be protected through parent councils, even though there is not taxation, but in fact a right to governance could be protected even without elected representation?

Ms Rettig: No. Again I'm not a constitutional lawyer and I'll ask others to join in assisting me in my response, but I would put forward that certainly that would not be consistent with guarantees within the Constitution. The right to tax will not be there and certainly the fact that one has to be elected democratically, be a member of the separate school community and elected by the separate school community, to make decisions for and be accountable to that separate school community.

Mr Claire Ross: The fundamental issue here is the right of trustees, which is vested in the Constitution Act. It is not vested in terms of parent councils. What we have in the context of the bill is the exposure of the minority relative to the financial decision-making powers that emanate out of Queen's Park. This was never, ever the sense of the 1867 agreement. In other words, governance was vested within the elected representatives of the separate school system, and it seems to me that this is offended significantly with respect to the legislation which has been tabled.

Mr Bisson: Mr Ross, I think you hit the nail on the head. That's the issue. Section 93 clearly spells out that governance means not just having a separate school board system. It means being able to make the policy decisions, and in order to make those policy decisions, you've got

to be able to control the revenue so that you have the money to make those decisions.

I guess the question Mrs Johns asked you was: "Don't worry. We're saying in the legislation that your constitutional rights are not being violated. Does that give you any kind of assurance?" I'd ask you that question and come back after.

Mr Marshall Jarvis: I think that the move by the government basically disfranchises Catholic ratepayers from directing their school system, and no one, no institution or body, has the right to give those up for any period of time.

I think there's a fundamental question here: Is this government prepared to undo the entire fiscal package that they have announced from mega-week by returning the property tax base to the Catholic system after five years? I don't see it happening and I'm sure we will remain silent on that point. But I think there will be a significant infringement and I do not believe the Catholic system will survive this type of attack over an extended period of time.

Mr Bisson: That's the point of what it comes down to. The real danger here is that you take what you have now, which is governance of your own system under the Catholic separate school board system and you say, "We're going to give it to the province, which is controlled by the majority." Therefore, it's going to be the Ministry of Education that's going to make the decisions on behalf of francophone education and separate school education. The question that flows from that is, what do you tell this government? If you feel as strongly as you do, as I do, that this is the wrong direction, if we're truly talking about governance, what do you tell them that they must do in order to protect your rights?

Mr Ross: I think the answer to that question is simple. We had an education finance reform group that worked on this for some 18 months and never once did we suggest this kind of model, any of the people who were at the table, for the very reasons that you allude to. The underlying fact that should be recognized by everyone around this table is that the government could have acted otherwise. It didn't have to move in this kind of a dramatic direction.

When I listen to the fact that there is a statement in the bill that says, "We're going to respect your constitutional rights," my question to you is, then why haven't you done it in the reality of the legislative proposals that are before us? Whether they respect the property designation rights, the right of the separate school trustees to manage their own system, the right not to invasively intrude into the system by means of financial decisions out of Queen's Park, these are fundamental and basic questions. I agree with you. They go to the very heart of the future existence of our system, and unless they are satisfactorily answered, there is no question — I don't think you have to be much a prophet to understand — what is going to happen and thus it is that the concern is so significantly stated at this table.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Rettig, Mr Ross and Mr Jarvis. I appreciate that yours was just a summary of a comprehensive brief. I assure you that the brief in its entirety will form part of the record.

Mr Duncan: I'd like to put on record a question to the Ministry of Education: To provide us with the constitutional legal opinion they have that this bill protects Catholic schools. The evidence we've heard is quite compelling that it does not, that what the government, by what it's doing now, is in effect undermining the ability of Catholic schools to function into the future and to undermine the ability of the Catholic school system to make fundamental choices that are guaranteed in section 93 of the Canada Constitution Act. I would appreciate a copy of the opinion that the Ministry of Education has defending the position that's been advocated by Mrs Johns.

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Mrs McLeod: In addition to that question, could we also be made aware of any guarantees which would have been offered outside the legislation, which would ensure the protection of constitutional rights?

Mr Skarica: If there is an opinion, I can forward it to

you. Is the ministry here?

The Chair: And Mrs McLeod's? Mr Skarica: The two go together.

Mr Carroll: To jump in on the same issue, it is interesting to note the opening line on page 4 of the brief from the Ontario Separate School Trustees' Associations: "OSSTA is pleased to note the government's continued commitment to constitutional rights that is reflected in the proposed revision to section 1(4) of the Education Act."

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Carroll. We'll wait for clarification from the government on that.

Mr Bisson: Madam Chair, I'll be prepared to bring documents from Catholic school boards up in northern Ontario that have quite an opposite view and think that you're taking away the right to governance of Catholic education in this province.

The Chair: I look forward to having that on the record. Thank you very much for appearing before us

today.

## ONTARIO FEDERATION OF HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

The Chair: Our next presenter is the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations. Is Ms McGuire here? Welcome.

Mrs Norma McGuire: Thank you. My name is Norma McGuire. I'm on the board of directors of the federation and I'm a past president of the federation. I live in Etobicoke. My colleague and I are here presenting on behalf of our president, Ann Smith, from Pembroke and our first vice-president, Pat Johansen, who lives in Thunder Bay. Both are fully employed and it's a little difficult for them to come to Toronto for a presentation.

Ms Genie Roth: Good morning. My name is Genie Roth. I'm an executive member of the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations. I am also president of associations and councils in the boards of Peel, Halton, Etobicoke, East York, Scarborough, Toronto, North York, the city of York and the York region.

The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations appreciates the opportunity to respond to Bill 104. The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations

is a parent, volunteer, non-profit organization and as such has a long and outstanding history of responding to issues that concern the welfare of children and youth.

During the past 81 years, the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations has responded to many proposals, including funding for Catholic education and the Hall-Dennis report. Within the past few years the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations has responded to the Royal Commission on Learning, the Fair Tax Commission, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the graduated licensing system, as well as Bill 119, An Act to prevent the Provision of Tobacco to Young Persons and to regulate its Sale and Use by Others.

As you can tell, our concerns and interests are diverse. The policies and positions of the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations are based on resolutions adopted by our association members at the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations annual meeting. Our comments are based on these policies and positions.

It is rather difficult to respond to the proposed Fewer School Boards Act. Our criterion for our response is, is it the best for each student? In review, we discover that we have more questions than we have answers. Bill 104 does not address the planned changes to the funding process which the government has announced; nor does the bill specify how the transition is to be accomplished. How do we, as parents and as an organization, begin to discuss or argue against the concept of equity in education?

Since 1964 it has been the policy of the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations to promote equal educational opportunities for all students in Ontario and across Canada. We cannot argue against the concept but we would like to express our concerns that without the whole picture it is difficult to support the changes. We believe that educational finance reform and educational programming must occur simultaneously with the reform of educational governance.

As an organization, we have observed many changes to education that have prompted associations to propose resolutions at our annual general meeting that have been adopted and forwarded to the Minister of Education and the Ministry of Education. How do we support the proposed changes with only half of the picture?

Although the Fewer School Boards Act does not deal with the issue, it is the policy of the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations to promote one publicly funded school system in Ontario. We understand the government's hesitation to implement one publicly funded system; however, we believe that one system could address the uniqueness of religion, language, culture etc. The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations also believes that it is the ultimate in efficiency.

Based on this policy, in 1992 we petitioned the Minister of Education and Training and the ministry to strongly encourage school boards to amalgamate mutual services, starting with coterminous boards. Although a great deal of progress has been made, there is a reluctance among coterminous boards to cooperate. Will the

format of the new proposed district school boards eliminate this or will this cause further divisiveness?

Mrs McGuire: We question the size of the proposed new district school boards: 33 public district school boards for 1.5 million students; 33 separate district school boards for 0.5 million students. Some 70% of the ratepayers in Ontario support the public school system. Does this appear to be equal? It is obvious to us that there is unequal sizing. As an organization, the home and school federation supports that locally elected school boards remain a necessary part of the education structure.

We believe that change can be beneficial and more efficient. We are not convinced that the proposed changes are the most responsible way of doing it. It appears unfeasible that with some of the new district school boards the geographic size of France and sparsely populated, the proposed maximum 12 trustees will be adequate representation for those communities. Three proposed district school boards — Toronto, Peel and Middlesex, London, Oxford, Elgin — will serve the same population as 57 school boards in the province of Alberta.

OFHSA recommends that the alignment of district school boards be more conducive to adequate representation.

The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations would also ask for your reconsideration of the honorarium for trustees. Ontario is unique in that it has a variety of populated areas, from dense to sparse. Each area requires the best qualified persons to represent our children. We question whether the best volunteers will stand for election by placing an unrealistic ceiling on the trustee honorarium. We want trustees who are dedicated to the education of our students and capable of fulfilling their duties.

We recommend reconsideration of the honorarium for trustees.

We have a great deal of concern that the proposed changes will alter programming. Each of the school boards currently has programs that are unique to their area. Will these be maintained or will they be lost? The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations has numerous policies advocating for programming for students. They're in your package.

The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations recommends that the Ministry of Education and Training propose now those programs that will be core programs. We want to know now. The public needs to know what funding will be available for those programs. The stability of our students' education demands it. The quality of our students' programs must not suffer.

The background information on the release of Bill 104 states that parents will have more say. The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, throughout its 81-year history, has advocated for parental involvement; that is what home and school is all about. In our opinion, every school should have a home and school; however, realistically we realize that probably would not happen.

We are concerned about legislating parental involvement. Our experience shows that parents become involved if they so choose. However, a rigid format such as proposed in memorandum 122, which is what we're going by now, does not allow much flexibility or workability. It could become difficult to maintain the representation as proposed. Home and school does not involve itself with the administration of a school; however, as parents we want to know what is going on and we want to be involved.

The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations recommends that school councils be advisory in nature only. We also recommend that the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations be involved in the proposed legislation regarding school councils.

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Bill 104 proposes an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition of school boards to district school boards. The overwhelming powers of this body are absolutely astounding. The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations has always been a partner in education. We were there before the teachers' federations. OFHSA will continue to be a partner. We will continue to advocate the best for each student.

The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations recommends that a member appointed by the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations be part of the Education Improvement Commission.

We thank you for your time.

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): Thank you very much for an excellent brief. As a person who was an active member of a home and school association, I appreciate

everything you've had to say.

Since there's only a minute, I'd like to focus on number one, and that is the alignment of district school boards. We've had a lot of focus on the Metropolitan Toronto board, but I'm aware that the map is going to mean real access problems when you get outside of the large urban areas. For example, I had a call from someone in the Muskoka area who said, "We're going to be lumped in with Lindsay." I know in areas like Huron-Bruce, hours away for travel time —

Mrs Johns: It's not Huron-Bruce; it's Huron-Perth.

Mrs Caplan: Huron-Perth. How can people have access if the distances that they have to travel to meet someone are so vast? Do you want to speak to that? Is that what you were referring to in number one?

Mrs McGuire: Yes, and be adequately represented. I think some of the small communities that have long had a board will now have one person. As you say, that one person will travel so far and people within the community will be so far from where that board is situated, how are they going to get access? Are you going to make a long distance phone call every time you want to talk to a trustee? Are you going to make a long trip?

Mrs Caplan: Have you done an analysis on how many of these boards actually would create the long distance situation or the number of miles of travel that would be from point to point? Has your association done any of

that? I haven't seen any of that analysis.

Ms Roth: I can only speak really from the experience of our home and school members in, say, the northern Ontario regions, outside of the greater Toronto area, the Golden Horseshoe, whatever you want to call it. They have great difficulty as parents communicating with each

other and among themselves and with their school boards because of the distances involved, and they're very concerned over the greater school boards that are going to be created. I can't give you specifics, but I know that there is a concern among those who have distance involved.

Mr Bisson: I want to thank you for your presentation. I guess I come to it this way: I come from Timmins. Our new board in the French separate system will run from a place called Calstock, which is north of Hearst, all the way down to south of North Bay. We're going to be limited to 12 trustees. Within that Highway 11 corridor, there are more than 12 municipalities. So the very simple question I have is, is that where you end up, in a situation where there's probably, on that particular board, somewhere in the neighbourhood of — I haven't counted it out — 20 to 25 municipalities that will be limited to 12 trustees, of which Timmins is about 40% of the population? Now, I'm the parent. I've got a problem. I live in, let's say, Sturgeon Falls or Smooth Rock Falls and I want to deal with a busing issue. How am I going to deal with that?

Ms Roth: Good question. I don't know. We don't have the answers either.

Mrs McGuire: You'll have a large long distance telephone bill.

**Mr Bisson:** In many communities there are party lines. If you can pick up the phone to call out - the point is, how are people going to get access to their trustees and to influence decisions of the board if (a) you can't get hold of the trustees because they're going to be so few and (b) they're not going to have any power?

Ms Roth: I would agree totally, yes.

Mr Bisson: The last question: In the last provincial election, the government said that it stood for smaller government and was not going to cut one cent out of education. They are creating huge bureaucracies with these new boards. Do you think that's contrary to their promise of smaller government and government closer to the people of Ontario? Are they fulfilling that promise or are they breaking it?

Mrs McGuire: That would be a personal opinion, and we are here to represent the federation's position. Yes, I can give you my personal position; I'll go outside the

door and do it.

Mr Bisson: I take it it will be embarrassing to the

government. Thank you.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): Thank you very much for coming in. The very nature of your group is that as parents you are very involved in the schools and their operation, or giving advice and so on and so forth. I understand from your report that you believe that school councils should only be in an advisory role. If you can take the quantum leap, as it were, and think of the bill being passed and there being school councils, how do you see your involvement? I know you would want to be involved in how that's established, but how do you see your role and what advice could you give if the bill is passed vis-à-vis the school councils?

Ms Roth: I'm speaking for myself, okay? I'm not speaking for the federation, really, because I can't speak on behalf of how everyone feels. Personally, I feel that

with an organization such as ours there is accountability. We are accountable to our members. With school councils, at this point it would seem that they are accountable to no one other than themselves, and we foresee special interests creeping in. How accountable will they be to the student population across Ontario?

I see pockets of little groups rising up in the schools and controlling. How beneficial is that for everyone across Ontario? How will there be equal opportunity or how will the equality of education be the same across Ontario if we have school councils that are not accountable? I feel that there's some form of accountability that has to be created. I don't know how that's to be created. Our organization will be very happy to suggest or offer ideas, but it's the accountability thing, who's accountable for what. That's my personal opinion, in any case.

The Chair: Thanks to both of you for coming in and presenting on behalf of your association. We appreciate it.

#### TAXPAYERS COALITION (PEEL) ONTARIO

The Chair: Our next group is the Taxpayers Coalition of Peel, Mr Mitton. Welcome.

Mr Don Crawford: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. My name is Don Crawford. I'm chairman of the Taxpayers Coalition of Caledon and vice-chairman of the Taxpayers Coalition of Peel. Today our presentation is going to be made by the president of the Taxpayers Coalition of Peel, Mr Blaine Mitton.

Mr Blaine Mitton: Thank you, Madam Chair. Firstly, it's wonderful to see changes taking place in a province which has a great opportunity to be first-class but is loaded with debt from previous governments that were gutless to take bold action. Those people with vested interests have had control for far too long with nil respect for those who have paid the bills or for those who have had to compete in an international market.

The trustees and educational bureaucrats must go if the system is to be fixed. Over \$6 billion of education cost is spent outside the classroom. This is a fraud on taxpayers. That's out of a total of \$14 billion totally spent on education. Pretty near half is spent outside the classroom.

Interruption.

Mr Mitton: Interestingly enough -

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr Mitton. I should explain the rules to you. In fairness to everyone, Mr Mitton has the opportunity to speak for 15 minutes. You will all be given your opportunity as time permits, but he must be given the opportunity to speak without any interference. 1140

Mr Mitton: Thank you. It was interesting that yesterday's Star, which I think sank to a new low, indicated, "Snobelen Heckled at Reform Meeting." A 10-year-old was used as an illustration to talk about class sizes. So we've dropped to using consultants who are 10 years old is what they're really saying.

In my region of Peel there are two giant board of education monuments with no one who teaches. This is where our money's going. It's not going to the teachers and to education. It's going outside the classroom and we need to get it back in the classroom.

Curriculum should be set by the province, the same for all. Testing should be standardized by the province.

Taxation must be taken away from school boards and done by the province. This eliminates one taxing bureaucracy.

Delegate the staffing responsibility to the principals, along with school management. This is why we have principals. They did it well in the past and most of have been through some of those.

Get the cost to educate one student down to \$5,000 per

year.

Allow students the right to fail. Give them this right early and they will improve dramatically and not be casualties of the workplace.

There's no place for mediocrity in our education system. From my experience it sure is there now.

I heard education bureaucrats talking of a two-week testing process to be fair to students. A friend I have in the placement business gives a 30-minute test to qualify an applicant for a possible job placement which could be a lifetime opportunity. The education bureaucrats had better get real. Cut the time and cut the costs.

Our unemployment rate is still 9.7%, while Ohio's is 2.6%. Keep the cost reductions and tax reductions coming for the taxpayers. We are not out of the woods yet. We cannot even compare US costs to our costs as we cannot afford the equivalent due to our high unemployment rates.

We will have \$120-billion provincial debt before the deficit is under control. There is no room for complacency or wavering.

Canadians have seen their share of the domestic market eroded by more then one third, over 30%, since 1980, and that's from the Alliance of Manufacturers and Exporters Canada.

To understand this better, just visit Canadian Tire, Wal-Mart, Zellers etc and look at the labels to see where the majority of our products are made. Obviously we are not competing. In the real world, the consumer wants the best value for their hard-earned after-tax dollar and therefore buys product at the lowest cost. More and more this is not from the Canadian manufacturer. Maybe we can get some real job and wealth creation started if we get our costs in line and taxes lowered. This is a very scrious situation.

We support cutting school boards from 129 to 66 and trustees from 1,900 to 700. In fact, we said ABCs, "Abolish boards completely," and bring it under a committee of municipal government. However, this is a good start.

Cap the trustees' salaries at \$5,000 per annum. This will eliminate people from the position who want to create a part-time job interfering with the true educators. We will find those who are interested for the right reasons.

The next real problem is the educational bureaucrats. These must be eliminated as in many cases they are the real culprits, with the trustees becoming their puppets.

Eliminate people with vested interests from school boards, such as teachers and spouses. Sometimes these make up nearly half of the boards.

Proceed with removing education taxes from property taxes, while completing the reassessment process. This is

important when one looks at the number of bankruptcies and tax arrears, while reassessment will still improve taxation fairness.

Municipalities can more readily take responsibility for welfare and subsidized housing. Maybe they will not be in such a rush to add on to development charges, which stunts development and reduces jobs. The rubber will get closer to the road.

Ensure current boards cannot sell, transfer or commit to sale of assets over \$50,000, particularly during this interim period of time.

Cap 1997-98 budgets to no more then last year's budgets. There must be absolutely no golf course commitments in Peel or elsewhere. For those who have had the audacity to promote golf courses in these difficult times, it only indicates their arrogance and disregard for getting our provincial deficit under control.

The drive should be to find out how much it should cost to educate one student per year and drive to that target quickly, with allowances for language and extreme

transportation options.

The education system has to be put together in a manner which improves quality and raises expectations.

The final draft of the new curriculum for elementary schools was perused by two of our parents and found to be sadly lacking. We believe this education minister truly wants to increase expectations and quality. However, on reviewing the new curriculum, it was felt the bureaucracy was coming in with a program similar to the current one and thus setting the education ministry up for criticism from both parents and teachers.

This is a sad state of affairs as it sets the ministry up for failure, but typical of bureaucrats, they have low expectations when change is required as they do not want to rock the unionized workforce into a more challenging lifestyle.

Interruption.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, please.

Mr Mitton: The emphasis on the student by Minister Snobelen is impressive. When one establishes what it really costs to educate a student from just the classroom perspective and institutes that across this province, together with curriculum standards and testing, amazing results can take place.

Competition can start within our school systems. Teachers will search for better ways rather than falling to the bottom of the provincial grade-ranking ladder. Too bad for the union leaders who have had it their way for

years.

Stay the course. It's time for a change and realignment. If there's no change, there will not be an improvement and less opportunity will be afforded our youth, and that's very important. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation. We have two minutes per caucus.

Mr Wildman: I noted from your presentation your support for removing education funding from the residential property tax, which has general widespread support among all parties. In the current proposal, of course, this is part of a larger package which includes the other part of the ledger, and that is the downloading of significant other services to municipalities, to the property tax, not

just hard services which are related to property values, things like roads, fire services and policing even, but also soft services such as long-term care for the elderly and disabled, public health, those kinds of services.

Do you support that part of the package, since it is all part of one package: the downloading of those kinds of soft services, health care services in particular, to the property tax?

Mr Mitton: I most certainly do support that. Welfare is particularly one of the big-ticket items on that and outte frankly—

Mr Wildman: I didn't mention that one.

Mr Mitton: Particularly within our area, what we're finding is that when the welfare issue is addressed and people are told they can get a job and they come to a placement area to get it, 50% of the people don't show up for a half-day training session on the methods to get a job, 25% show up belligerently and the other 25% really want a job. Quite frankly —

Mr Wildman: Do you think that's true of the elderly

on long-term care as well?

Mr Mitton: No, no. My point is that when the rubber hits the road and the management of all of these services gets closer in those specific areas, a lot can be done to change and to help and to benefit. So I think it's more —

Mr Wildman: So you think the long-term care will

benefit from it?

Mr Mitton: I think so.

Mr Carroll: Thank you, Mr Mitton. According to a set of statistics published by the union representing the secondary school teachers, OSSTF, we spend US\$950 per student more in Ontario to educate a child than they do in Alberta and our results, as we all know from international studies and studies that are done, indicate that we perform substantially below Alberta's student standards.

We had a lady come forward to us yesterday and recommend that we raise the per student funding in

Ontario to \$8,000 --

Mr Wildman: I thought that was Mr Moll.

**Mr Carroll:** — which would involve about a 25% increase in the funding for education in the province. Could you tell me what effect you think that kind of move would have on the quality of education in our

province?

Mr Mitton: I think quite frankly it would probably decrease the quality of education. Quality of education and costs are not synonymous. They've got nothing to do with one another. It has to do with expectations and a whole lot of things that have to go on in the classroom. We can't even compare ourselves with the US because we can't afford even what some other countries do. We've got a \$120-billion debt and we have to deal with that.

Mr Wildman: What's the deficit in the United States? Mr Mitton: I heard people talking about constitutional changes and legislation and so on, and I'm amazed. I mean, people could go broke and companies could go broke and you'd still be talking about the Constitution. I have no understanding of this. I'm sorry. But to answer your question directly, costs and quality are not synonymous. They've got nothing to do with one another.

Mr Skarica: On a point of order, Madam Chair: I find it somewhat disturbing that when there's a witness who advances the government's position or is in favour of it, they get interrupted by the crowd and by some of the politicians. I just don't think that's appropriate. We don't interrupt people who have opposite views, if I could just point that out.

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The Chair: Thank you, Mr Skarica. We're doing our best to maintain order. Ladies and gentlemen, this is a democratic society. People are entitled to their own opinion.

Mr Duncan for the official opposition, please.

Mr Duncan: I just wanted to go through your presentation for a couple of moments and then ask you about it. You indicated in your first bullet point that no one teaches in your region. In fact, there are quite a number of teachers. You said that the curriculum should be set by the province. The province does set the curriculum across the province. You're indicating that testing should be standardized by the province. It is standardized by the province.

"Taxation must be taken away from school boards and done by the province." We support the province funding education. What we don't support is what you're supporting: a massive property tax increase for the people in Peel region, which is going to happen. Every expert, including your own regional government, is saying it's

going to happen.

You're saying that we should get the cost of education down below where it is just about anywhere else except undeveloped countries. We disagree. We think that's just utter nonsense and you ought to be ashamed of yourself for representing ratepayers with that type of position. We think we should be spending more per pupil and demanding better results and there should be nothing wrong and no disagreement with spending more per pupil

no disagreement with spending more per pupil.

I'd like to know, I guess in a general sen

I'd like to know, I guess in a general sense, how you're going to explain to the ratepayers of Peel when their property taxes go up, the quality of their education goes down, their students can't compete. You say that our schools are mediocre. I disagree. We can always do better. The fact is, we've got students performing very well by international standards everywhere. I just attended a ceremony the other night where students in my community were receiving scholarships to the best universities in the world. I think this kind of approach — raise property taxes, raise taxes, reduce services — undermines what in our view ought to be a system that awards success with better funding and better equipment. It also fails to recognize that our schools are in the 1990s, not in the 1940s.

Why wouldn't you advocate spending more to demand better results instead of attacking the people who are

trying to make our school system work?

Mr Mitton: Maybe I'll let Mr Crawford answer this one and get another perspective to let you know it's not all mine, but I've travelled internationally for a good number of years and I disagree with you vehemently.

Mr Duncan: You've got your facts wrong here. Why

should we take anything you say -

Mr Mitton: I'll refer Mr Crawford to your question.

The Chair: Let him answer, please.

Mr Crawford: You've asked a lot of questions of the presentation that Mr Mitton made. The only one I can

speak to with any authority is in my investigation into what's going to happen to the property taxes in Peel. We do not agree with you, sir, that the property taxes in Peel are going to go up after this is going to happen.

Mr Duncan: Well, you're all wrong here. Mr Crawford: No, we didn't say that here.

Mr Duncan: These facts are wrong. You've simply —

Mr Crawford: No, I'm talking about

The Chair: Mr Duncan, please let the witness answer. Please let them answer.

**Mr Crawford:** You said that the property taxes in Peel are going to go up.

Mr Duncan: Way up.

**Mr Crawford:** The indications we have, because we monitor that very closely, our organization does, are that they are not going to go up.

Mr Duncan: You're wrong.

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): You're wrong. The sky is falling, Henny Penny.

**Mr Duncan:** These facts are all wrong. Why should we take your word on that?

**The Chair:** With respect, Mr Duncan, we must give time to the witness to respond and not interfere.

**Mr Crawford:** Madam Chair, the only thing I wanted to respond to was about the taxes going up in Peel.

The other thing is the figures from Alberta, by the way. Our figure from Calgary was that it was \$5,000 per student to educate a student in Calgary. That board is almost the same size as the Peel board that spends close to \$7,000 per student. So our figures are a little bit different that we received from the school board in Calgary than you have, but we'd like to just throw that out for the record.

The Chair: Thank you both very much for appearing today and for putting your views on the record.

## CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES, ONTARIO DIVISION

The Chair: Our next presenter is from the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Mr Ryan. Thank you very much for being here. Welcome. I'd ask you to present your co-presenters, and you have 15 minutes.

Mr Sid Ryan: Thank you. To my right is Charlotte Monardo. Charlotte is the chairperson of our jurisdictional committee dealing with education workers. On my left is the coordinator for education workers in CUPE.

I'm Sid Ryan, the president of CUPE Ontario.

I'd like to begin by saying that CUPE represents almost 35,000 education workers in the system. There are roughly 47,000, all told, support staff workers in Ontario, and I'd like to begin by saying that each and every one of these workers, those represented by CUPE and those who are not represented by CUPE, are worried sick today by the powers that have been vested in this Education Improvement Commission, which we believe is going to lead to the total privatization of the jobs of these workers.

There's a pattern developing here with this government. They seem to go out and want to demonize and stigmatize workers or people who disagree with this government. We've seen it with the people on social assistance. They were scapegoated and the public was led to believe that all of these social assistance recipients were

sitting at home drinking beer. School teachers have been scapegoated by this government; school trustees, most recently; OPSEU workers; Metro councillors; mayors. Anybody who disagrees with this government has been scapegoated, and now we're beginning to see an agenda where support staff workers are about to get scapegoated.

You heard the previous presenter, who I note, by the way, is from Peel region, a cheerleader for John Snobelen, no doubt. He made his disparaging remarks about the wasting of taxpayers' dollars being spent on people who are working outside of the classroom, leading us to believe that all of those workers in the system who are doing a fine job today, an excellent job of delivering a quality education system, are somehow less than worthy, that somehow these people are ripping off the taxpayers, that somehow these people are not giving us a quality product. That's the kind of scapegoating that I guess we're going to see in the near future.

In July 1995, John Snobelen publicly stated his intention to "invent a crisis" in Ontario's education system, a crisis that would justify the kind of radical reforms his government wanted to make and, no doubt, those reforms that the Peel taxpayers association have just alluded to a few moments ago. Not surprisingly, our schools have come under a constant barrage of criticism ever since. The charges, each one disputable: education spending is out of control; too much money is being spent outside the classroom; our students are graduating without a good education; teachers are overpaid and have too much control over education. I just found out a few moments ago that the union leaders have all the power and control in this province as well.

Bill 104 is nothing more than the predictable outcome of this propaganda campaign. If Bill 104 is passed, the government will begin to exert a new control over Ontario's education system, starting with the establishment of the undemocratic Education Improvement Commission. Bill 104 is the government's first big step down the road of privatizing Ontario's schools. First, non-instructional services will be outsourced. Next, no doubt, will come the handing over of the construction and maintenance of our schools to the private sector, then charter schools, and finally privatization of curriculum and even teaching, as exists south of the border.

CUPE does not believe that our public education system is broken; at least it's not broken yet. It will be broken if this government gets its way. In fact, we wonder if that just might be the agenda: Break the system and then use the public dissatisfaction that is created to

build public support for a private system.

This presentation will focus on the issues in Bill 104 that most directly touch the lives of the 35,000 CUPE members who work in Ontario's education system. This is not to say that CUPE is not deeply concerned about the process being put in place for mergers and amalgamations, the government's intention to control and reform curriculum, or the government's attack on the province's teachers. As time does not permit us to give a presentation on all of these issues we would like to address, we urge the government to take into account the concerns of the teacher unions and groups like the Ontario Education Alliance.

We believe Bill 104 is an attack on jobs in every community across the province. The Education Improvement Commission will be mandated to recommend to the government how to, not whether or not to, outsource all non-instructional services in the system. It would appear that the privatization of tens of thousands of decent jobs is based on the government's constant contention that too much money is being spent "outside" the classroom on services like caretaking, maintenance and school administrative services. Minister Snobelen said yesterday that the government is wasting money on administration. I think it's interesting to note that the taxpayers cheerleading coalition that just left a few moments ago also made exactly the same statement, that money is being wasted on administration outside of the classroom.

It sounds like this government would like to return to the time of the one-room schoolhouse, when students walked all those miles through minus-forty-degree weather to get to school, the teacher swept the classroom and lit the wood stove in the winter, nice neighbours would shovel the snow, repair the roof, and do any painting that was necessary. Students would never be bothered by intrusive school psychologists, speech therapists, guidance counsellors or special education assistants. And of course there were no phones, no photocopiers, no fax machines, so there was no need for expensive school secretaries. In fact, in those good old days, the system was really run cheaply.

Are the many services available in today's system worth the extra costs? Of course they are. We have a world-class education system, as was attested to when the Durham Board of Education and Sinclair Secondary School were awarded the prestigious Bertelsmann Prize for excellence in education just last fall. These are not the only world-class boards or schools in this province. Our system is world-class because it is public and it has developed good processes of governance and accountability.

If the government is not suggesting that we can do without these important services in our schools, then what they must be saying is that employees who do these jobs should earn lesser wages and have lower working conditions. In our opinion, this is an unacceptable jobs strategy by anybody's standards. The average CUPE school board worker supports a family on less than \$24,000 per year. CUPE members believe our education system and their

jobs are worth defending.

Before I pass off to Charlotte to finish off our presentation, there are a couple of questions I would like the committee to answer. First, we know that Bill 104 gives unprecedented powers to the EIC. What we would like to know is: Does this EIC have the ability to contract out the work and the jobs of CUPE members in this province and all support staff workers? Does this committee have the power to override collective agreements? Does this committee have the power to eliminate successor rights for support staff workers in this province? They are three important questions that we'd like this committee to at least take a shot at answering.

I'm going to pass over to Charlotte.

Ms Charlotte Monardo: What about the quality of non-instructional services? Does it matter if private companies clean the school, maintain and repair the plumbing and the furnace, handle student reports, and staff school and board offices? In CUPE's experience, it very much does.

Ontario's students deserve the best possible environment in which to learn. In fact, studies have shown that students do better in clean and comfortable learning environments. They also deserve reliable, well-trained, well-treated staff in their schools. CUPE's experience with privatization in the education, health care and municipal sectors shows that service invariably suffers. Buildings are not as clean. Lower-paid and insecure staff have a higher turnover. Sometimes contractors go out of business, leaving the public to pick up the tab. Ironically, it can often cost more, not less, to contract out public services. Time and again we have seen that privatization is done only for ideological reasons, not because it provides better service and not because it costs less.

When the Harris government attacks jobs, it attacks communities too. Yes, there will be private sector jobs in schools if private companies take over non-instructional services. But the need to make a profit will dictate that there will be fewer jobs provided, they will pay less, and they will not provide the benefits and fair working conditions that inspire loyalty and consistency in staff.

Taking money out of the pockets of workers takes money out of the local economies around the province. Consumer confidence is already low. If Bill 104 is passed, landlords will find usually reliable tenants suddenly not able to pay their rent, banks will have former school board employees defaulting on mortgages, and local retailers will see business fall. Such an economic strategy is simply unacceptable, especially in a province where the real unemployment rate stands at 14.2%.

Privatization will not only take money out of Ontario's local economies. Currently, large American-based companies are best positioned to profit from the sudden and massive privatization of non-instructional services in Ontario's schools. Contracts with these companies will siphon taxpayers' money out of the local economy, the region and even the country.

CUPE is very concerned about the establishment of the Education Improvement Commission. It seems that the government is unwilling to take full responsibility for the changes it is about to unleash on our schools. Instead, an unclected and unaccountable body will take over what should be the responsibility of elected politicians at both the provincial and local levels.

The North American Free Trade Agreement and the current negotiations on the Agreement on Internal Trade also present serious considerations that must be taken into account. Provisions in NAFTA make it virtually impossible for services that have been privatized to be taken back into the public service, whether or not privatization works out. Once the Agreement on Internal Trade is expanded to include the local government sectors, there is reason to believe that these provisions will also apply to school boards. If total privatization of non-instructional services were not to work out, therefore, boards could only take this work back in-house if the companies in-

volved were financially compensated for all lost business, now and in the future. Obviously, the cost of taking the work back into the public sector would be prohibitive.

In closing, I would like to take you on a journey and have you go back to the days when you were in public school. If I asked you who your grade 1 teacher was, chances are you don't remember. But if I ask you who the custodian in your school was, chances are you do remember. Remember the school secretary and the things that the school secretary did over and beyond the typing of letters? Yes, we are a very important part of the school, and we ask that those jobs stay there. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation. We have just over a minute per caucus.

Mr Carroll: A quick question for Mr Ryan. You made a quote that our system is world-class, and obviously you and I would agree that our system exists to educate our children. I'm sure you would agree with that. How then can you rationalize in this world-class system designed to educate our children, where we spend more money than most other jurisdictions, that our children do not perform as well as even national or international standards when it comes to testing? How can you explain that in our world-class system?

Mr Ryan: First off, we've just had the ultimate test where our students in Durham region were put up against the best in the world, in terms of a system that was measured against other systems across the entire industrialized world, and the Sinclair Secondary School and the Durham Board of Education came out as the number one board in the entire world. So I just cannot agree, Mr Carroll, that somehow the students that we are producing coming out of our school system are any lesser than the students that are being put through educational systems in any of the countries you'd like to refer to - the United States, for instance; you keep using the United States as an example. You talk about, how can we afford the education system here in this province, given our debt load? Well, what about the debt load you've got down in the United States?

Mr Carroll: I didn't talk about the United States.

Mr Ryan: Well, you talked a little while back about it, or your friend did at least, in Ohio. God forbid that we ever see our education system in this province go down to the levels that you're proposing in Ohio or even Alberta, where you've got charter schools. We've got the Yamaha school of excellence, where students only get accepted on the basis of their excellence in their musical ability, and that's the primary focus of the school system. That's where you're taking us, Mr Carroll, with your charter schools and your privatization.

Mr Carroll: You don't accept the test results.

Mr Ryan: The average person in this province does not want to go where the Tories want to take us, I can assure you.

The Chair: Mrs McLeod for the official opposition. Mrs McLeod: I was just responding once again to Mr Carroll's interpretation of the test results.

To talk to Mr Ryan specifically about a major focus of concern in the brief, one of the statements that was made by the Ernst and Young consultants to the ministry when they were asked to look at the savings in amalgamation was that costs could in fact go up under amalgamation as you began to harmonize services and salaries. Clearly the government does not intend to see costs go up under this model, and in fact we all suspect they may want to take considerably more money out of education.

So it seems to me that they have a dilemma: They have to find dollars somewhere, and fairly large dollars somewhere. We obviously think the use of the \$6-billion figure is a way of suggesting that the out-of-classroom expenditures are expendable, whether it's janitorial, custodial services or busing of kids. We know that's not true, but things like that are going to be an area of focus, as you have suggested. You've said that means, in terms of outsourcing, either less service or it means salaries of less than an average of \$24,000. But there's another possibility that was suggested yesterday, and that's that the government may shift the costs of a chunk of what is provided out of the classroom right on to the municipal property tax base. Do you have any sense that that might be what's contemplated?

Mr Ryan: We tend to believe from the leaked documents that were put together by a group of consultants for Al Leach and the recommendation was that there were roughly \$500 million that could be saved both in the educational system and in the municipal system by eliminating successor rights and coming in with contract overrides — those overrides basically would mean that any collective agreements provision that provided any degree of job security would be a barrier to the private sector coming in and they should be eliminated.

We think it's more likely that they will focus on eliminating successor rights. As we all know, when it happened to OPSEU, they lost 13,000 members overnight and 8,000 members just about two weeks ago when these mega-week announcements came in. So they've lost 21,000 members in OPSEU just strictly by eliminating successor rights.

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We think that's where they're going to go, more so than dumping more of the education bill back on to the taxpayers. It's possible, depending on how much of a fight the CUPE members can put up and the parents and teachers' associations, the more we become aware of just what this will mean in the system. In other words, when you get rid of these workers out of the system, then you say, "Okay, what type of a system do we have left?"

Let's go down to the United States once again to where the Tories want to take us. Get on a bus, go down to New York City, take a look at the inner-city schools in New York. I've been down there; I've seen them. We've seen the graffiti on the walls. We've seen the violence in the schools. We've seen school children and certainly teenagers carrying weapons, and that's basically because you've got a privatized system. Primarily these workers are not in the system —

Interjection.

Mr Ryan: You may not agree with that but, for instance, there's a lot of child abductions attempted recently in the Metro area. You ask any of our maintenance workers, any of our caretakers, any of our secretarial workers and they will tell you, sir, how many people, how many strangers, they eliminate from our schools on

a daily basis. That type of service you do not get with the private sector, who happen to come in at night-time to clean the schools, are paid \$8 per hour, and once they get a job at \$8.50 per hour, they exit the system and leave.

So on a weekly basis you're going to be seeing new faces in that school system. These people will not be screened the way our workers are, they'll not receive the training that our workers receive on a daily basis, and consequently the safety of children in this province will be far less than it is today under the publicly funded system that we have where these workers have been doing an excellent job for the past 55 years in this province under a publicly funded education system.

Mr Wildman: You've raised a lot of issues. I'm particularly concerned about what you've said, I think accurately, about NAFTA and the effects of that agreement on a privatized system. You can't put it back after.

But I'd like to follow up on the issue you just raised, Mr Ryan, and that is safety. Currently we have a system where we have well-qualified people in schools who are doing jobs, who understand the school; they're part of the school community and they are a very important cog in terms of the safety of kids. If we have a more sort of revolving-door type of thing of minimum-wage workers working for contractors doing those kinds of jobs, there really is an issue of health and safety of kids, not just in terms of how well the school is maintained and cleaned but in terms of potential serious problems related to abuse. Have you addressed that in any way with the boards and/or the ministry?

Mr Ryan: First off, we would love to have a meeting with the ministry. We've probably made about a dozen phone calls. My office has called personally across to John Snobelen's office, to Al Leach's office. We have not been consulted. We have not been able to get in the door to sit down with any of these ministry staff to talk about these concerns. We know that the school boards around the province, the separate school board in Durham just the other night, are beginning to take votes in support of the support staff where they're saying, "We don't want

to see you eliminated out of the system."

I'll just give you one little story. I was on a picket line outside Janet Ecker's office, as a matter of fact, just two nights ago with Local 218, the Durham school board workers. We were outside on the sidewalk a couple of hundred of feet down demonstrating against this particular bill, and a car was coming through the picket line and this woman rolled down her window and said, "I've got to come back and join you," because she had two of her sons in the back of the car and they said: "Oh, mommy, there's Mr McEwan, our caretaker. We've got to come out and see what's going on here." So she went in to do her business, came back out and joined us on the picket line, because the child felt very comfortable and related to that caretaker and felt very safe. She told us the story of how when her child started school, the caretaker took the child from the class, because the child was crying, down to his office and had lunch there with the child, and the next day the kid felt very comfortable going to school and formed a really nice relationship with that caretaker.

You don't get that type of service, you don't get that kind of bonding between support staff workers if the system is privatized. If it's a revolving-door type of syndrome, it doesn't happen. You don't have the time to develop the relationships for children to feel safe, and as Charlotte says, it is directly related. A child's ability to learn is directly related to the learning environment, that safe environment that we find in our school system, which is completely different in Canada than it is down in the United States, where, again, the Tories want to take

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Ryan, and thank you to your co-presenters for being here today and for stating the views of your organization. We appreciate it.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair. Mr Rvan asked a very specific question during his presentation and I would like that to stand as a question to the ministry for a direct

response.

Mr Skarica: I think I could answer it right now, actually. If you look at the legislation, it says, "consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations to the minister on how to promote and facilitate outsourcing of non-instructional services" by district school boards. So the answer is clearly no from reading that section.

Mr Ryan: Sorry. The answer was which?

Mr Skarica: There's no power, therefore, for the commission to do any of those things you suggested. All they can do is "consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations to the minister."

Mrs McLeod: The answer's also no, there's no

protection.

Mr Wildman: In other words, they can recommend that it be done; they just can't do it themselves.

Mr Ryan: If I could have just a second, except that under section 344 of the act, it says that none of the decisions of the EIC can be challenged in a court of law.

Mr Froese: Is this presentation over, Madam Chair? The Chair: We don't want to get into a detailed discussion of this. The question was to put it to the ministry, and perhaps, Mr Skarica, you could forward that for a formal response.

Mr Skarica: All right.

Mrs McLeod: The other point following from the presentation was that I wonder whether the committee could consider a recommendation that when we're in the Windsor area, we look at whether there would be adequate time to visit some of the Detroit inner-city schools.

Interjection: That could be arranged.

The Chair: Perhaps the subcommittee could consider that and come back to the committee with that report. Thanks very much.

Thank you again very much for being here.

Interjections.

The Chair: Excuse me. Mrs Johns, Mr Duncan, excuse me. Ladies and gentlemen, if we don't have order, we'll have to recess and we'll take valuable time away from the last presenter.

The Chair: Could I ask the Etobicoke Board of Education to come forward. While they're getting settled,

Mr Wildman.

Mr Wildman: Just to clarify this for the sake of the members of the committee and the public, if the committee wanted to move a motion now opposing charter schools and vote in favour of it, that would prove that we're not in favour of an American system. I'd be quite happy to vote along with Ms Johns against charter schools and to express an opinion to the government that this committee is on record as opposing charter schools. That would prove we're not in favour of an American system. Do you want to move that motion?

Mrs Johns: I would like to move to the presenters.

#### ETOBICOKE BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: If there's no motion on the floor, we'll pass on to Ms Haas, the chair of the Etobicoke Board of Education. Thank you for your patience. I know you've been waiting a while to make your presentation.

Ms Kathy Haas: As you can see, there will be an adjustment because it's now after noon, so it's no longer "Good morning" on the presentation. It's similar to how life goes day to day in a school, or maybe even hour to

I'm Kathy Haas, chair of the Etobicoke Board of Education. I'm also a parent of four children presently enrolled in the system, one in elementary, two in middle and one in high school. I also was raised and educated in and graduated from the Etobicoke Board of Education.

I'd like to thank you for providing me the opportunity to speak to Bill 104. Bill 104 clearly states the provincial government's direction to reduce the number of school boards, reduce the number of trustees and assume the responsibility of financing education in Ontario.

I'm not going to suggest the status quo; that won't do. Reforms are absolutely necessary. However, the reforms must meet two very critical criteria. First, it is imperative that all reforms improve the learning opportunities for students; second, the reforms must not overturn local control while sidestepping democracy. Today I will be presenting a compromise solution that I believe will meet the provincial government's agenda while ensuring excellence of opportunity and continued local democracy.

The Etobicoke Board of Education has an excellent reputation within the community. This was recently confirmed in an independent communications audit report dated December 1996. In part it stated, "The vast majority of respondents believe that the Etobicoke Board of Education has a high profile in the community and that the board's image is positive."

There is a common belief in Etobicoke, however, that the Metropolitan Toronto school board is dysfunctional. Although it has served its purpose historically, its weaknesses are becoming more obvious as it strives to equitably distribute funds for approximately 300,000 students in six large, transient and culturally diverse communities.

The Etobicoke Board of Education has always demonstrated its fiscal responsibility by ensuring cost-effectiveness in all areas of its operation. For 12 straight years we have returned surpluses to our ratepayers. For 12 years we have demonstrated excellence in education without

spending our formula allocation provided by the Metro

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Not only have we maintained a top-quality academic and technical reputation, but we have also introduced many unique and innovative programs that address the enormous changes in diversity that have occurred in our city. We have tackled our at-risk cultural and language challenges in such a cost-effective way that our per pupil costs have been decreasing every year for the past five vears.

I am here today because I'm concerned that our success at fiscal responsibility, while maintaining excellence, will be lost within the Bill 104 model. Bill 104 would legislate the amalgamation of seven local boards into one. The Etobicoke board on its own would fit into the government's plan. With almost 40,000 students and still growing, it would be one of the largest boards in Ontario. I am strongly recommending that Etobicoke be maintained as a single board.

A board of 300,000 students, representing 2.3 million people, will be unmanageable. In fact, it would be responsible for more students than most of the other provinces in Canada. Each trustee would oversee approximately 34,000 students. In other Canadian jurisdictions the average trustee would oversee 8,500 students.

The Sweeney report suggested representation of nine trustees for the Etobicoke board; the province is suggesting three. A compromise solution would be to adopt the federal riding boundaries, as suggested, and then split these boundaries in two. This would reduce the existing 12 trustee positions to six. It would provide accountability to local residents while maintaining programs that address the special needs of our diverse learners.

This proposal would allow for local democracy, a form of governance the province is accused of eliminating. It gives parents a real voice, while still empowering school councils. This fits with the government's agenda of reorganization through clearly defined roles and reduction of duplication.

In order to address the issue of education financing, I'm proposing a moderate local residential tax base levy of 10% to support our unique needs. This, combined with the ministry's proposed funding model, would still allow the province to determine the cost per pupil, while providing the necessary funding for special needs. Also, by permitting a moderate residential levy to accommodate local differences in priorities, there would be no need to proceed with the proposed constitutional legal challenges.

Coterminous board models appear to be driving the mega-board model. Under the proposed Etobicoke model, working with our coterminous boards, the municipalities would not be impeded. For example, the Humberwood Downs facility, located in north Etobicoke, is the largest multi-use facility in Ontario. It opened in January 1996 and is home to an elementary public school, an elementary Catholic school, a public library and a community parks and recreation facility.

Etobicoke could serve as a provincial model. The addition of three trustees at remuneration of only \$5,000 per year is hardly an onerous price to maintain costeffective local democracy.

Allow me to provide examples that support my conten-

tion of Etobicoke remaining as a standalone board with

six trustees and a moderate local levy.

Islington Junior-Middle School is located in central Etobicoke. It is a school whose community is proud of its high standards and international characteristics. In 1988 the school had an enrolment of 510 students; 300 students resided locally in single-dwelling homes within a middleto high-income community. The Middle School gifted program was centrally located at the school in order to provide ease of access for the gifted students. The gifted program did not put a strain on the local school and community.

In October 1991 staff presented a report on the crowded conditions at Islington Junior-Middle School, due to, in large part, the change in demographics within the local community. A large number of rental buildings in the immediate area were being vacated by seniors who had moved to service facilities or unfortunately had passed away. After community consultations with all stakeholders, the board decided to build an addition to the school. The gifted program could remain since there was no other site that could adequately accommodate it at the

Recognizing that the capital program could not totally fund this project, we needed access to money in the Metro capital incentive fund that had accrued through our, the Etobicoke board's, lease and rental agreements. Subsequent to this report, in September 1992, which is only two years later, Islington Junior-Middle School, with its rated capacity of 571 learners, had 706 learners enrolled. There were six portables onsite and the site could no longer fulfil the needs.

The enrolment pattern and projections clearly indicated a requirement for long-term classroom space over and above the original estimation. The board proceeded for another addition. I'll move quickly through this.

Ultimately, in 1996, the gifted program has been relocated. We reopened a mothballed school and Islington Junior-Middle School is now home to 724 local students who are living in the buildings surrounding the school.

This is a dramatic turnover. Along with that, since September 1996 to January 31, 1997, there have been 239 admits and demits to the school - this didn't include the junior or senior kindergarten component — the majority of whom did not speak English. Surmounting the language barrier and dealing with immigration papers and related issues adds considerable time and stress to any school office.

Teachers must plan in order to meet the social and academic needs of each of their learners while dealing with constantly changing classroom dynamics. Classroom groupings and seating arrangements require constant

It was calculated at Islington that 603 of the 704 students live in the 14 apartment buildings that surround the school. All but two are rental buildings. Where are their backyards? How does this affect programming and the day-to-day interaction with the students?

At the same time, it was discovered that out of the 704 students, only 227 spoke English as a first language. Of these 227 children, only 199 of these children were born

in Canada; 32 children still have cultural adjustments and some speak English dialects. There are 45 different languages spoken by children at Islington. Some 36% of the students in grades 1 to 8 have only been in Canada one to two years and 22% have been in Canada three to five years. There is a high demand for both direct and monitored in-class ESL and ESD support, speech and language, attendance and counselling, guidance support and itinerant behaviour resource teams. These services, combined with a dedicated staff, volunteer parents, seniors and co-op student volunteers make this school unique within Etobicoke, and it requires constant local attention.

All communities are deserving of their unique recognition and needs. Most people remember a feature article in the Globe and Mail, November 28, 1992, titled "A Home Called Dixon." Just a review of the community and the school: Kingsview Village Junior School is located just north of Dixon Road on the west side of Kipling in central Etobicoke. In May 1990 it was home to 385 students. It had a multicultural population and many of the students were born here, but they had East Indian and Pakistani ethnicity and were primarily English-speaking. Throughout the 1990 school year the population grew by approximately 70 students. The new students were just the beginning of the Somali influx and many of the students came from well-educated, wealthy families escaping as refugees.

During the school year, September 1990 to 1991, after the already 70 students, the population grew again from 420 to 525, mostly new Somali admits. The school was required to reorganize four times within that year and two portables had to be added to the site. From September 1991 until June 1995, the school population grew to 732 students. An addition of 11 new classrooms were built. Six of the 12 portables were left on site for continued expansion, community parks and recreation programs, and a Somali network and adult ESL classes. Kingsview became a community school. As of today, there are 785 students. There have been 212 admits and demits since September, not including kindergarten.

Due to the enormous population explosion, we were unable to predict the numbers of newcomers and times of arrival. The newcomers were predominantly non-English-speaking refugee claimants from Somalia, without the support systems of conventional refugees or immigrants. Most of the Somalis are living in private condominium development, with no services and inadequate facilities and space. The families are living together in very crowded conditions, which is problematic for them and their non-Somali neighbours. With the rising tension in the condominiums, the school was a safe haven for the community.

The Somalis were coming from war-torn Somalia refugee camps to Etobicoke where life bore no resemblance to their former life experiences: different language, weather, food, housing, schooling, customs and religious practices. They had no experience living in a multicultural community and no community services were available. As refugee claimants, there are no health services provided except for emergency services, immunization and TB testing. Many of the children were in school with serious unmet medical needs.

There continues to be community concern regarding tuberculosis and other contagious diseases. Students and their families are suffering from post-war traumatic stress. They remain unattended because of the lack of service and cultural bias against mental health assistance. The programs developed by the Etobicoke board have creatively accommodated these diverse needs.

Students are living in fractured families; parent or parents are dead, imprisoned or fighting in Somalia. Many siblings or other child relatives are in the home, often more than eight. Over time, as families are brought together, further adjustments and problems occur that lead to marital separation or divorce. Students often are extremely aggressive because of having survived a wartorn state and having a lack of language to express their feelings.

These learners have extensive academic needs. Typically, they have had interrupted or no previous schooling. English has been their third or fourth language because of refugee flight. There are illiterate parents who provide no ongoing support at home. The principal and staff at Kingsview Village School, as well as the Etobicoke Board of Education and the community, have responded in an exemplary way through special education programs and community service outreach programs to meet the academic and social needs of this very unique community.

These are examples of only two of Etobicoke's 69 schools in a city of 300,000 residents and 40,000 students, a situation that would not be found in Bracebridge, Sudbury or North Bay. I'm not saying that Bracebridge, Sudbury or North Bay are less important; I'm saying these situations wouldn't be found there. I'm not familiar with the specifics on their situations, but they need recognition as well.

Without local governance, it would have been impossible for these young learners to receive the services they needed. Without an education, we would simply be passing on the problems to society, and it costs a lot more per person to incarcerate than it does to educate.

In summary, I'm requesting that this committee maintain the Etobicoke Board of Education as a viable operating board, reduce the number of trustees from 12 to 6; possibly reduce the existing boards from 7 to 4 or whatever you feel is necessary for Metro; provide a local levy of at least 10% in order to accommodate special local needs; and reduce the role of the non-elected Education Improvement Commission to advisory and auditing. It is inconceivable in a democracy that a non-elected body control the workings of an elected body. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs Haas. Unfortunately, time does not permit any questions, but we thank you for your thoughtful presentation and it will certainly form part of the record.

We have information for the committee. During one of the presentations this morning, I believe the Ontario Public Supervisory Officers' Association, the name was mentioned of a representative of the ministry by the name of Carrier-Fraser. She is Mme Mariette Carrier-Fraser, who is the associate deputy minister, elementary and secondary operations and French-language education division.

We also have two motions that are to be put to the committee from the subcommittee.

Mr Wildman: I move that this committee recommend to the government House leader that the order with respect to Bill 104 be amended so that further public hearings can be arranged; further, that this committee recommend that the three House leaders meet as soon as possible to discuss this issue.

The reason for this is obvious. We have over a thousand presenters already who have indicated that they wish to make presentations on Bill 104. We can only accommodate a small number of those. Many people have expressed dismay at the fact that they will not be able to make presentations and wish to make presentations on this bill that is of such great importance to the future of their children and to their communities.

I think all members of the committee desire to have as much input as possible from the public and would agree with this proposal, that we recommend to the government House leader that the order be amended to allow for further public hearings than are now allowed for.

The Chair: Debate? No debate?

Mr Skarica: I will simply state that we are going to hear from hundreds of people and that we are having four days of committee hearings here and we're going to be travelling the province, going to six centres, I believe. The government feels that's adequate input, as we will be hearing from hundreds of people, hundreds of presentations.

Mrs McLeod: I want to re-emphasize the fact that the people who are going to be affected by this legislation do not feel there's been adequate time. It's one of the reasons about a thousand people who had asked to make representation are not going to be heard. I also want to reflect on the fact that a great number of our presenters have asked, why does this have to be done in such a hurry when it brings about such sweeping changes?

The Chair: Any further debate? Then we're ready for the vote.

Mr Wildman: Can we have a recorded vote? The Chair: All right.

#### Ayes

Duncan, McLeod, Wildman.

#### Navs

Carroll, Froese, Johns, Preston, Skarica, Smith.

The Chair: We have another motion from the sub-committee.

Mrs McLeod: I move that this committee recommend to the government House leader that the order with respect to Bill 104 be amended so that the committee can sit on March 3 or March 4 at its regular meeting time to ask technical questions of the staff of the Ministry of Education and Training pertaining to Bill 104, The Fewer School Boards Act.

I present this motion because, after only a day and a half of our hearings, you'll recognize that there have been a number of questions, and I've tried to be careful to make sure those are legitimate questions where there should be information relevant to the bill that can be

provided by the ministry. Obviously, there have been a lot of other questions that are the focus of debate, philosophical difference, but a lot of concerns are being raised about the number of questions that at this time don't appear to have answers. I think that constitutes a very serious condemnation of the bill, and before this bill goes forward from committee it should be possible for the Ministry of Education to come and address those questions.

Mr Wildman: I second the motion. Just to use one example, it's been mentioned a number of times that the ministry is working on a new formula for funding education to come up with a per pupil grant which will significantly change the way boards have funded their education programs for their students. Apparently, there will be a consultation on that, but only after this bill is finally passed into law, if it proceeds according to the schedule the government now desires. Many boards and teachers' groups, as well as parents, have indicated that their views on Bill 104 are directly related to what decisions might be made with regard to funding. It's important that we be able to know what the funding formula is likely to be before we actually report this legislation back to the House, because it may lead to amendments that are important for making this bill workable for the benefit of our students.

Mr Skarica: I wonder if we could just defer this vote until later today, and then I can check with the ministry and the minister to see what his position is.

The Chair: Is that agreeable? All right, we will defer the vote. We are recessed until 3:30 this afternoon.

The committee recessed from 1237 to 1529.

## BOARD OF TRADE OF METROPOLITAN TORONTO

The Chair: We'd like to start properly to give everyone an opportunity to speak and not have to wait too long. Our first presenter is from the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Toronto, Mr Alliston.

Mr John Alliston: I'm John Alliston, chair of the education committee at the Toronto board of trade. I'd like to introduce my three colleagues this afternoon. Bruce McKelvey is vice-president of the board, honorary treasurer and will be leading the presentation. Merilyn McKelvey and John Bech-Hansen are staff assistants with the board.

The Chair: Welcome all.

**Mr Bruce McKelvey:** As a preamble, first I'd provide a little bit of background on the board of trade's involvement in matters surrounding education at both the policy and the program level.

As you may know, the board represents approximately 10,000 members in the Metro Toronto business community and it is the largest board of trade or chamber of commerce in Canada.

We have a number of standing committees and task forces that address matters of policy and program support. I'd like to bring to your attention that we have an education policy committee that has been active for a considerable number of years. It's made up of 25 volunteers who are representative of different industries, differ-

ent backgrounds and so on and so forth, supported by the board's policy staff.

In addition to policy positions, the board is also very active in terms of program support for education in the Toronto area. We have established programs such as Principal for A Day. We've been involved in the grade 9 Take Our Kids to Work Day program. We have been very involved with providing Speakers' Bureau support and things of that nature. So we divide our activities between the policy area and the program area in support of education.

I would like to preface my remarks by saying that the primary interest of the board of trade is in improving the quality of education, and we believe that very strongly as individual members and as an institution.

We do not believe, however, that maintaining high quality simply represents more input into the current system. Indeed, in a capsule comment, I can say that the board of trade very strongly backs the current government in its proposals it's putting forward right now, and I'd like to provide you a little bit more detail on the specific areas where we would like to comment.

The board supports the proposal to create one Metrowide public school board. The board also strongly supports the reduction in the number of trustees in Metro from the current 104. The board supports the move by the province to assume greater control of education costs. The board supports the goal to fund each student's education according to his or her needs.

We believe that with the province assuming responsibility for the distribution of education funding, it will then be possible to institute a uniform financial reporting system for all school boards. We believe this is a needed process.

The board recommends the establishment of a uniform, province-wide rate of tax on commercial and industrial property for the support of the education system. The board believes residential property tax should remain a local tax in support of the schools and the community, but with a province-wide uniform tax rate established by the provincial government.

The board strongly opposes the elimination of the residential property tax for education if it means that municipalities will have to carry a heavier burden of funding responsibility for social and health services.

The board believes the province can obtain an equal measure of control over education spending by establishing province-wide uniform rates of taxation on residential, commercial and industrial property as it can by eliminating the residential property tax for education.

The board calls for clarification on the future roles of the trustees, school councils and the Ministry of Education and Training. The responsibility for teacher federation and other major employee groups, salary and benefit negotiations should be confirmed before the trustees' salaries are established.

Finally, the board is in favour of increased outsourcing in the operations of the school boards and would like this matter immediately referred to the Education Improvement Committee for implementation.

Those are the summary comments I have to make and I think it might be useful for you to know that all of

those comments are ones that have been developed by our policy committee over the past, I guess, probably two or three years. It wasn't difficult for us to put together a list of observations and supporting views when this issue came before us.

Now, on behalf of the board, myself or my colleagues here, we'd be pleased to take any questions you have to put to us.

**Mrs McLeod:** I appreciate your brief. I appreciate the work the board of trade does in recognizing the importance of education and the relationship of education and economic issues.

You've already noted and have publicly spoken out, expressing your concern that the tradeoff for taking education off the residential property tax is at this point the offload on to municipalities of a number of other social services, and you've mentioned that in your brief so I won't get you to elaborate on that unless you would like to.

I'm wondering whether or not there is a real recognition on the part of business that they continue to pay the education tax and that the province is going to be levying a direct tax on business properties for education.

I think that's the first time in Ontario's history that there will be direct taxation on property by the provincial level of government. Business therefore is going to, first of all, continue to pay an education tax, have to pay its share of the offload of social services on to the municipal base and there's an unknown quantity to it because it is the province that's levying that tax.

Mr McKelvey: I'll ask John Bech-Hansen, our board economist to respond.

Mr John Bech-Hansen: The issue for us: We've always accepted there's always going to be commercial-industrial taxes for education; maybe you can get rid of the residential tax. The trouble with getting rid of the commercial-industrial tax is that the yield of that tax is about equivalent to the total yield of the Ontario corporate income tax, so if the province tried to take it away and levy it as, say, part of the corporate income tax, that corporate income tax in Ontario would have to double to raise that amount of money. We just take it as a given that you can't get rid of it and it's there.

With respect to the downloading of the social services, we're concerned about the impact that will have in Metro Toronto, as you know, and in other places, but one has to bear in mind that under the new assessment system there's going to be variable mill rates between different classes of property.

It's going to be possible to offset the impact of downloading, or I should say the elimination of the residential education tax. While there is still a commercial education tax, variable mill rates can be used to mitigate the impact between different classes of property.

Mrs McLeod: It's a bit tenuous because I don't think any of us really know how the mill rates are going to be applied, but I've asked the ministry directly whether or not they're going to have uniform mill rates across the province or whether, as a ministry, they will be setting the mill rate community by community. They've said they haven't actually made that decision yet, that there's going to be a panel—

Mr Bech-Hansen: That's right, yes. We would like to see a decision made on that quite soon, but we haven't seen one yet.

Mrs McLeod: I agree with you that none of us would have thought you could take the education tax off commercial properties. I would have said you can't take the education tax off residential properties 100% because it was going to have a significant impact on personal income tax or on some other area.

I don't think anybody anticipated long-term care, social housing etc being put on to the property tax to make up for that, but there's surely no question, even with the business occupancy tax coming off, that goes on to the ministry property tax if municipalities are to make that up since it was municipal revenue. Businesses paid a disproportionate cost of this as opposed to the residential property taxpayer. Is that a fair statement?

Mr McKelvey: I think, though, if we go back to first principles, the board does not have a problem with the province being very much more involved with the economics and the funding of education. We have no problem with that at all. Yes, we have got a stated concern relative to the downloading of welfare and other social services. That's a different issue.

Mrs McLeod: Right. I think it's a question of balance and who does what in terms of what's affordable.

Mr McKelvey: We understand the balance, but we have clearly two views on those respective matters.

Mr Bech-Hansen: If I could just supplement the points very quickly, we accept the idea that the provincial government should have control of education finances; we simply make the point that they could have all the control they needed just by controlling the rates of property tax on all classes of property. They could have gotten just as much control as through what they've done. 1540

Mr Wildman: Thank you for your presentation. I want to follow up the questions of my colleague. I recognize that what you've said is that there are two separate issues, but they are part of a package, as Mr Leach has indicated clearly; that is, taking education off the property tax and putting public health, long-term care, social services on to it as part of the package. The question is, do you support the package?

Mr McKelvey: We're here to talk about our view on policy reform relative to education, and we believe the views we've stated are very clearly in support of what the government is doing in the area of education. We believe it is a separate issue in terms of —

Mr Wildman: It isn't. Mr Leach has said it isn't; it's part of the same thing. Whenever there are questions about the downloading of public health, long-term care, social housing, welfare on to the municipal property tax, Mr Leach and other ministers justify it because education has been taken off. It is part of the same package, and my question is, do you support the package? Bill 104 goes along with Bill 103 and all the other municipal restructuring announced during mega-week. They are a package; the question is, do you support it?

Mr McKelvey: Our view relative to the downloading around welfare and some of the other social costs is well known. Let it be equally as well known that the board of

trade has been commenting for a number of years about its dissatisfaction with the current system and policies around education. We have been extraordinarily dissatisfied, and we believe the steps being identified here by the government are positive ones in general terms and we support them.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Wildman.

Mr Wildman: Frankly, Chair, the answer is not clear. Number 8 says, "The board strongly opposes the elimination —"

The Chair: I agree, but in fairness to everyone, we have to give —

Mr Wildman: There's a big "if" on number 8.

The Chair: Mr Skarica, for the government caucus.

Mr Skarica: I'd like to address point 11 in your news release, in reference to outsourcing in the operations of school boards. Union people have come here and indicated that they object to it on two bases: first, that it is an attack on working people, and second, they feel some concern about the safety of children in the school, that a caretaker who's been there for a long time, who's unionized, gets to know the kids and assists them in safety concerns, that if somebody comes in the school they know this person doesn't belong there and escort them out, that kind of thing. Do you have concerns along those two objections?

Ms Merilyn McKelvey: May I speak to the second one? In terms of safety of children, it's an ongoing issue and it's not just caretakers. The elementary and the secondary schools throughout Metro are actively initiating different proposals to have safety more prevalent in the schools, and they have different procedures they're instituting this year. In particular, they are asking people to register; they're to have badges etc. Caretakers, I'm sure, and other staff are able to help supervise that process. But in terms of children's safety it's bigger than just who the caretakers are in the school.

Mr Smith: For the first day and a half, we've heard a great deal about concern centred on the loss of local accountability and the ability for people to remain active in their education communities. Recognizing your observations 2 and 3, do your 10,000 members share those concerns about accountability within the school system?

Mr McKelvey: We've spoken and have many ways of soliciting feedback from our membership. As I mentioned, we have a very active volunteer committee. There are 25 different members, and in addition to being business people, those members are also parents and have families of their own and come from all different parts of the Metropolitan Toronto community. I don't believe there is a concern about losing a community identity. In fact, we believe there will be improved quality and improved service in the classroom and in other areas when these proposals are adopted.

The Chair: Thank you very much for appearing before us today and giving us the views of your organization.

#### URBAN ALLIANCE ON RACE RELATIONS

The Chair: The next presenter is the Urban Alliance on Race Relations, Antoni Shelton. Thank you very much for being here.

Mr Antoni Shelton: Thank you very much, and good afternoon. I'd like to start by stating quite clearly that it is my position and the position of Urban Alliance that education is a very, very important concern for us in the constituencies we work with. Unfortunately, however, many more people who look like me are not in the room today, were not in the room yesterday and we feel won't be in the room tomorrow, because quite frankly we believe the environment has become one that is perceived as quite insensitive and hostile to their needs, and not indifference.

Urban Alliance has been working for over 25 years in the field of education as a major area to help with the delivery of education to new immigrants and minorities in the province of Ontario. From the very get-go, Urban Alliance has been working with a number of boards, mainly in the GTA, but I would like to bring to your attention that there are Urban Alliances in Ottawa, Sudbury, Windsor and London.

We were formed in 1975 by a group of concerned Toronto citizens, a multiracial, multicultural group. At the time, the group was formed because there were hate crimes happening in the Toronto subway stations, where people were actually being pushed off subway platforms because of their race and religion. Our goal, however, is to promote a stable and healthy multiracial environment in the community.

The alliance is a non-profit organization consisting mainly of volunteers. We work with over 300 volunteers currently and we have another membership, paid-up membership, of over 300 individuals. We come from all sectors of society, culturally and racially. We see it as part of our central advocacy mandate to speak to Bill 104, an amendment to the Education Act.

We've had a lot of positive experiences with school boards in the GTA. We continue to provide, during this month of February, workshops for Black History Month, role models, motivational speakers and mentors in schools. We've provided policy advice and input around school curriculum and equity policy development.

This is all well and fine, but at the same time, where it's needed, we've not held back on our analysis and critique of the current system. As many know, we've been very vocal around the lack of equity resource people and policies in many school boards. We believe that in many school boards the issues of equity and access are implemented in a patchwork way and that there's inadequate training and planning for the long-term implementation of equity policy.

In the time remaining, let me turn more specifically to the amalgamation of school boards. Bill 104 proposes to eliminate school boards and replace them with district public school boards. In Metro Toronto, this would mean the replacement of the current six school boards with one new Metro Toronto district public school board. The number of trustees would be reduced from 74 full-time to 22 part-time. We believe this would result in the loss of effective local democratic government, with a provincial government takeover, and the loss of programs and activities that promote equity and special needs in schools.

The ethnic and racial demographics involved in centralizing power have largely been neglected by both the Harris agenda and the opponents to this agenda. What we have in the Harris agenda isn't only the lack of local democracy and instead, as some say, communism, but we believe that in the lack of local democracy we have an increasing perception that this is a type of a cultural apartheid: largely privileged white managers controlling all aspects of daily life of what's an increasingly multicultural and multiracial soon-to-be majority in the GTA. 1550

Immigrant and racial minority parents are increasingly having individuals who are sensitive to their needs and come from their own communities win seats as trustees. This is one of the areas in which we are seeing access. In simple terms, the trustee's position is one of the immediate and direct areas for our diverse communities to become involved and to hear and see their culture represented by a public body. Large, powerful bodies and governments, unfortunately like yours, ladies and gentlemen, are increasingly not reflecting our reality.

Bill 104 means that local concerns will be subordinated to the majority, increasingly the 905 belt. And \$5,000 in pay for trustees is to really render the position menial. Like so many other areas of public policy in the province, we're turning the clock back. The problem with this of course is that the face, the languages and the smells of Metro have changed forever, a fact that is being sidelined because there is fear, we believe. At a fundamental level, from human to human, there is this fear that minorities in the caucus, minorities in the cabinet, in your constituency, will begin to understand that economic and technological efficiency by itself is simply not enough.

Those who control the levels of power in this province are largely wealthy white males, and through the repeal of employment equity, amalgamation and downloading, there is a real and concrete plan for this group to take back what they want and give away what they don't want.

Taking education off residential property taxes means you're taking flexibility out of the education system. You're effectively wrenching creativity and flexibility out of the hands of parents and communities. What will happen, for example, to the debate around alternative schools? You must be aware that quite recently there's been a push in many communities to have focus schools, whether it's a black focus school or whatever the community might be. What happens to this type of system in the new proposed Bill 104 environment and what do we get in return? The control over welfare?

Our difficulty, and you have to help us with this, is that we've been unable to educate ourselves in our constituency, because we haven't seen projections around the impacts that might happen as a result of Bill 104. Why no adequate consultation, the kind of consultation that says you don't have all the answers and want to give time and opportunity to volunteers largely, who can only come after 6 pm, to have some input? We need to do an adequate job so that submissions can be comprehensive.

Minorities in and outside of Queen's Park have to wake up and smell the coffee themselves, and we take our own responsibility. We believe that there is some power-grabbing going on here by those who are privileged, mainly white males; that this is happening too fast

and there's too much involved to say otherwise. Before the demographics change, this is happening, we believe, in terms of timing, with a sense of a plan. This kind of fear, we believe, is what fed the apartheid agenda, and we believe fear, at its rudimentary level, is feeding the Harris

An Education Improvement Commission, with five to seven commissioners appointed by the provincial government, will have a mandate until the year 2000, not elected by taxpayers. Furthermore, their decisions are beyond the review of our courts. Why? Replacing locally elected trustees with provincially appointed commissioners who are beyond the review of the justice system is to further undermine the rights of parents who do not hold a Conservative Party card. Thank you.

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much for your presentation. Just before I put the question to you, the deputant, I ask the parliamentary assistant to answer this question: Why does the bill have a provision which makes decisions of the Education Improvement Commission not

appealable to a court?

Mr Skarica: That's modelled after some similar legislation in the health care industry and so on, the health care legislation.

Mr Duncan: Your own Bill 26. Mr Skarica: It's modelled after that.

Mr Wildman: It begs the question, why is that legislation designed that way?

Mr Skarica: I think the commonsense answer is that then you'd be involved in court battles virtually forever and that type of thing, so it's to streamline the process.

Mr Wildman: We can only hope that they are infallible so they won't make any mistakes.

Mr Skarica: We've got one of your members, so we're pretty confident there.

Mr Wildman: I was under the impression, and my friend here can advise me, that only one individual is believed to be infallible and that's only when he speaks ex cathedra.

Could you explain why you think that changing the remuneration for trustees and amalgamating the boards so we have fewer trustees is going to make it more difficult for multicultural communities to be represented and reflected on boards of trustees that govern education in

Metropolitan Toronto?

Mr Shelton: Quite clearly it's a question also of economics, that in many of these communities these positions are not patronage positions per se. These are positions that people very much dedicate their lives and commitments to. They have obligations and it's seen as a career; it's seen as part of what they can put back into the community and be adequately compensated for their, I think in many cases, expertise. It's a question again of economics. They cannot afford to do otherwise. On this menial, part-time basis it's going to be inaccessible on that level.

In terms of the amalgamation, you know the GTA a little bit yourself. I'm sure you've been to Greektown, to Little Italy, to the West Indian part of Bathurst and Bloor, and you can see that this is the way we're organized. Whether it's right or wrong in 20-20 hindsight, this is the way—

Mr Wildman: The neighbourhood.

Mr Shelton: The neighbourhood, the local community. In that sense, this is what we thought was the strength of the GTA in a sense: these local neighbourhoods.

Mr Preston: A number of people today have commented on the \$5,000. I would like to know, in the communities that pay their trustees \$4,000 or \$5,000 really as an honorarium, the trustees are coming in there because that is something they want to do. Are you intimating that these people are incompetent because they're not being paid \$50,000?

Mr Shelton: No, Mr Preston, I would not be so bold as to even suggest that. I think what I am suggesting—

Mr Preston: Well you used the term "menial." Would

you explain that one to me then?

Mr Shelton: I'm here as Urban Alliance in the GTA and I'm here talking about the fact that there are some standards we have fought for long and hard in the GTA. Fair compensation for the amount of work and the commitment and the long hours, the committee meetings that people have to put in — if it's a luxury, that those can volunteer to give their labour without adequate remuneration, then that is a very fortunate position for them to be in, but to render those positions inaccessible because others are not as fortunate I think is more the way I would like to present it.

Mrs McLeod: The government will say, and does, around the committee table that they want to believe that what's happening here with this bill and the companion piece of taking over educational funding is an equalization of funding. My concern is that it's the first step towards a major loss of equality of opportunity in

towards a major loss of equality of opportunity in education because it's a question of whether or not the funding is going to be adequate to meet the needs.

We've heard some very compelling testimony in the last day and a half from people involved in Toronto schools about the needs in the Toronto area schools. I look at the government's track record in terms of funding cuts in junior kindergarten and adult education outside of Toronto where they have had funding in the past, I see the loss of special education and I worry about what's going to happen to the kinds of needs of people in Toronto schools that we've been hearing over the last day and a half. I wonder if you would like to comment on what you think this might do to equality of opportunity.

Mr Shelton: I think this is a very good point, because the "fair" goes two ways. There's "fair" on our side too. There's "fair" in what happens when you take those programs away that we fought long and hard for, special programs from, for example, so-called inner cities. I work on the front line and I'm proud of it. I've worked on the front line for a long time, but it's tough. It's not the pretty stuff sometimes that we would like to see. We know sometimes how tenuous it is; it's really tenuous. Without that resource person, without that program as a diversion from what the kid is involved in or not involved in, there would be some real exasperation.

It has not happened, but when we look into the near future and the medium future, we're fearful because the impact of this kind of thing we believe is going to be very serious. This is when I asked for some kind of an analysis, both economic and on a social front, and we don't see it and we're even more concerned.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Shelton, for presenting your unique views and for representing the Urban Alliance on Race Relations.

#### FEDERATION OF WOMEN TEACHERS' ASSOCIATIONS OF ONTARIO

The Chair: Our next presenters are from the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, Ms Gee, welcome. We're delighted to have you here. As you take your, places I'll ask you to present your co-presenter. You have 15 minutes for your presentation, not a long time but I'm sure you'll make the most of it. Any time that's left over, the committee would be delighted to

ask you questions.

Ms Margaret Gee: I hope there will be time for questions. When you said there are just 15 minutes, it reminded me of how many people want to present and are not going to be able to. I deeply regret that because I think consultation should have been essential around Bill 104. I can't believe that people are being turned away parents, other groups. I'm starting from the position that the lack of consultation is of great concern to my federation, which represents 41,000 women elementary teachers in Ontario. I realize you just got the brief, so I'll go through it a little bit with you.

When we look at Bill 104, it seems to me that it is saying, "Bigger is better and we'll save money." There are many ironies in this. When David Cooke, the previous Minister of Education, took some initial work on amalgamation, he found it did not save money in the case of Ottawa-Carleton and in the case of Middlesex-London. I'd also refer you to the eastern provinces and the experience of Halifax and Dartmouth, where those two cities were forced into combining. It cost the people who live there money from the amalgamation. The fact that we're supposedly saving money is an illusion. It's been proved already that this is not the case.

I come from North York. That's my board of education. I will be returning, if this bill goes through, to a system that will have 300,000 students and over 11,000 elementary teachers. I personally will have lost my

I'm just one person but I think about what that means to the students in the system. You're combining boards that are very different. People who live in Toronto have many programs that would not be available, for instance, in other parts of Metropolitan Toronto because everyone knows that Toronto is the centre for newcomers.

The English-as-a-second language programs that are so essential for new Canadians to mainstream are not delivered to the same extent in other parts of Metropolitan Toronto, for obvious reasons. Toronto has been a centre where new Canadians have gone to. It's the same kinds of thing with special education programs, and if you can find me a speech teacher anywhere in Metropolitan Toronto I'll be delighted, because those kinds of services are being cut back and Bill 104 will only increase that.

In other words, children are going to lose out because of Bill 104. I'm horrified, as an individual teacher, at what is happening to our system of education. But then I represent teachers, and at this point in time they are full of fear for their future, and that shouldn't be.

For teachers to do their best work they should have some security, and we're looking at what will happen in terms of collective bargaining, in terms of funding, because Bill 104 has many gaps in it. You cannot talk about changing a system so radically and leave out these big questions, like what's going to happen to teachers' agreements. I'll ask my colleague to focus on that.

Ms Kathleen Loftus: I'm Kathleen Loftus and I'm on staff at the federation of women teachers. One of the issues I would like to focus on as well, and I will get to the collective bargaining issue, is the context of all this so-called education reform and the fact that the limited consultation there is on this proposed bill is done in isolation from all the other things this government is planning to do that will directly affect education. I think that is one of the major areas of concern.

If there is a vision for education in Ontario, and one could only hope that there is because our children's futures are at stake, that entire vision would be put forward and the entire community in Ontario would work towards something that would indeed improve education.

and that should always be our goal.

When it's done in a piecemeal manner, as it is being done, and things are being plucked out, as this bill is, the amalgamation of the school boards is being plucked out and discussed quite in isolation from the funding and the funding structure, which the government has told us is going to change and may indeed continue to decrease; when collective bargaining is also being talked about by the government and various commissions, and that too will change dramatically in the spring, perhaps, and that's being discussed at a different time; it clearly says that perhaps there is no vision and there's no picture at the end of all this and things are just moving in a haphazard way. Those of us who are very concerned about education and the children in Ontario are not being given all the information to be able to suggest what kinds of things we would like to see changed or the way we would like to see those things changed. I think that's a very fundamental problem with the way this is happening.

One area I would like to focus on in particular is guaranteeing rights for teachers and employees in general, but we represent women elementary teachers and that's what I'll focus on.

In previous legislation that has dealt with amalgamation of school boards, the legislation has outlined that collective agreements will remain in place until a new collective agreement is negotiated. There have been guarantees of transfer of employment and transfer of specific benefits and rights for those individual teachers who are currently employed by boards. We see that none of that is outlined, but what we do see is a commission, an EIC that says it will have overriding powers on anything in order to recommend things to the cabinet.

We see this as being a particular difficulty and putting the whole system at risk, because if you have people not knowing what's happening to them from day to day, you cannot expect the system to continue to move forward and to improve, and one would hope that would be what all of us would want, that the system would improve. Also, taking away the powers of local trustees and local school boards to make certain decisions certainly takes one step away from those children having a direct input through their parents and through their own communities.

In our brief, we outline many other areas that are of concern to us. One of the things we would like to say is that we are not opposed to change and teachers are not opposed to change, and we are not categorically opposed to amalgamation. But the local school boards need to make those decisions. The local communities need to have input into those decisions. It cannot be a top-down-driven imposition.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you. You talked at the very beginning of your brief about the fact that amalgamations and bigger jurisdictions can prove to be more costly as well as less accessible and more unwieldy. That was a concern expressed in the Ernst and Young report, the same report the minister uses to talk about the \$150

million in savings.

They also say there are factors that could increase costs of education through the process of amalgamation. They specifically talk about harmonization of services and harmonization of salaries. I think it's pretty obvious that the government does not want to see costs increase on this. As you've said, our suspicion is that they want to see costs decrease as a result of this and have taken over educational funding. How do you think they're going to harmonize services and salaries without costs going up?

Ms Gee: I don't think they can. They have already got the research on hand that proves that it's more expensive. It's like that little grade 5 student said yesterday, "All that's going to happen is we're going to have bigger classes, less resources." It came from the mouth of a child, and it was true. What he's saying is true. We're not going to save money. We're going to have much worse learning conditions and working conditions for teachers.

Mrs McLeod: So lower services?

Ms Gee: Yes, and fewer services, in my opinion. I've read the report you've quoted and it's right there already. Why are we playing around with this? The government

has that research. They know.

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much for your presentation. I know this is probably difficult for you to believe but in the House today the Premier denigrated the contribution of that grade 5 student, and basically said that we couldn't depend on children, as if they might not know anything about classrooms.

Ms Gee: Well, he's not sitting in the classroom.

Mr Wildman: I think the evidence of that student was

very credible.

I want to ask you, though, specifically about what you raised right at the beginning, that is the tremendous interest we've had expressed to this committee from members of the public, particularly parents but also students, teachers, trustees and members of the general public who may not be directly related to the education system. In making presentations to this committee, we've had over 1,050 already and this is only the second day of hearings. We'll be lucky if we can accommodate about 200.

How would you react if I told that you just prior to the lunch break I moved a motion in this committee to have the committee request the government to change the agenda, to change the motion and to extend these hearings so more people could be heard but that the majority on this committee voted it down? What would that indicate to you about the position taken by the government in this regard?

Ms Gee: It's clear that consultation is not the name of the game. It reminds me of Bill 26, where an MPP had to do something dramatic to even get hearings. Alvin Curling had to stay in the House all night. We're at that kind of level, it would seem. If the people want to talk to you — and you can only lead with the consent of the led — you should extend the hearings, you really should, because you will regret, down the road, that you didn't.

People have a right to consult on something as important as education and should not be denied the opportunity, particularly parents. They are, as Mr Snobelen says, the clients of the system. We're not listening to our

clients, it would seem.

Mr Froese: Thank you for coming. In my riding—and I know a lot of the members on the government side—we are listening and we've done a lot of consultation. I've spoken to a lot of teachers' associations. A week or so ago I was even invited to a dinner by the Lincoln county chapter of the women teachers' association and we have had some good discussion. It's unfortunate that in a place like here at Queen's Park you get the political rhetoric. I don't appreciate it. I just like to talk about the issues.

Ms Gee: I do too.

Mr Freese: I've had a lot of consultation with the boards of education and teachers. My sister's a teacher. I still have teachers who are friends. I still call them friends, they're still my friends. What they tell me, all they want to do is teach. That's what their job is, that's what they want to do, they want to teach.

Ms Gee: They want to teach, though, with reasonable

working and learning conditions.

Mr Froese: That's correct, you're absolutely right.

Ms Gee: So I hope they're telling you about what's

going on.

Mr Froese: I've asked this question of groups and associations like yourself. When it comes to Bill 104, the question really is, how does reducing the number of trustees affect your job and your teaching? It's administration, it's a board function. How does reducing the number of school boards and the trustees affect your ability with the child in the classroom?

Barring all the rhetoric that it's going to change the way — we won't have resources and all that — that's not what Bill 104 is about. It's about reducing the number of trustees and the number of boards, which is a totally administrative level and it's got nothing to do with — and I'm trying to find the answer how it's going to affect your student-teacher relationship. Could you tell me how?

Ms Gee: Bill 104 is about taking money out of the system away from the classrooms —

Mr Froese: Bill 104 is? How?

Ms Gee: Because in reducing you are reducing the services, and if you think all a trustee does is manage, I

think you don't know any trustees. You certainly don't know the trustees I know. They do a much more valuable job than that.

The Chair: We're running out of time. Thank you very much, Ms Gee and Ms Loftus, for appearing before us and sharing your views with us.

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#### TAXPAYERS COALITION BURLINGTON INC.

**The Chair:** Our next presenters are from the Taxpayers Coalition Burlington Inc.

Ms Gee: I hope you extend your hearings.

**Mr Preston:** If we don't run into these people in every single town we go to, every single one, then we probably could accommodate a lot of people. I wouldn't want to hear —

The Chair: Mr Preston, if you don't mind, let's not take away from the next presenter.

I will ask you to introduce yourselves for the committee.

Mr Frank Gue: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm Frank Gue, education chair, Taxpayers Coalition Burlington, and with me is Mr Richard Kelso, who is also on the education subcommittee.

Founded in 1991, Taxpayers' Coalition Burlington wants quality services at low cost and works to elect likeminded politicians. In education, quality comes first. We are not mindless penny pinchers or teacher bashers. We recognize and applaud the intent of Bill 104, and we have some concerns and suggestions. Some of these lie in the big grey area between policy and procedure, and we'd like to ask you to recognize that they are bottom-up thoughts intended to help shape policy. Several of them, we can assure you, will determine whether the good intent of the bill has the desired results.

We have nine concerns and at the end of each we have a question which is addressed to the government, and we will address this group as if they were the government and give that question. Our nine concerns are (1) conflict of interest, with four subitems; (2) productivity; (3) the basis on which school systems are paid; (4) the pupilteacher ratio, a relic I think of the late Palaeozoic; (5) hazards in school councils and education improvement committees; (6) contingency plans of the boards; (7) financial statements, the smoke and mirrors; (8) school boards don't really generate any significant costs at all; and (9) misuse of taxpayers' resources by unions and others.

In detail then, under conflict of interest:

Item (a), teachers or spouses may not run for a board unless they take leave of absence. A special interest group, we must point out, with a large cash flow could load a board by paying salaries for a leave or by paying the pension penalty for early retirement. You need a clause such as: Insiders of any kind shall not run for a board within X years of leaving a board position. Question: How will you avoid this built-in conflict-of- interest potential?

Item (b): There is a community representation short-coming in the bill. The 70% of taxpayers with no children in the system simply must find representation on the

commission and/or its committees. I must correct a misapprehension: The client of the system is not children, not parents; the client of the system is society. Seniors, employers, young people with preschoolers must have seats. What will you do to ensure that this 70% of the population is specifically targeted for representation on this important commission and its committees?

Item (c): Why is the bill limiting conflict of interest to spouses? "Family members" should be the wording. Is the commission to review the scope of this conflict-of-interest

clause?

Item (d): The act as drafted, section 333(5), says that insiders and relatives may run for a board if they take leave of absence during the election campaign, subject to section 30 of the Municipal Elections Act "with necessary modifications." The draft seems to contradict the minister's stated intent to bar spouses of insiders from office, until one reads the Municipal Elections Act; and even then one is left wondering what the necessary modifications are. This is convoluted and may lead to misinterpretation and possibly, in the event, unworkable law. We ask simplification and clarification self-contained inside Bill 104 so that it doesn't appear to contradict itself and the minister.

Concern number 2: The bill must address productivity, that is, more graduates per teacher-year. A 0.1 change in the PTR, pupil-teacher ratio, is worth \$1 million to a typical board, such as Halton where we are. Please overcome the incorrect mindset that "80% of costs is salaries and benefits and so we can't do anything about it." Please, please, get rid of that. Without a productivity component, the entire thrust of the act will be lost. Will you require boards, or whoever will be taking over this work, to look at the big dollars, the wages, instead of picking away at the small dollars like supplies, depriving teachers of the resources they need in the classroom? Education for some years in some jurisdictions has been suffering the death of a thousand cuts.

Concern number 3: School systems are paid for inputs, so much per head, so much per year of experience, so much per university degree. Ladies and gentlemen, as long as we are willing to pay for inputs, man, we will get lots of inputs. We have to start paying for outputs instead, for example, so much per credit course passed.

This would reverse the present incentive, which is to keep children in the system as long as possible for headcount. Surely our objective should be to educate them appropriately and move them promptly into the workforce. By the year 2020, we are told, the number of productive workers per pensioner will be down to two. The school system can help that significantly by graduating students faster.

Mr Wildman: Isn't it a question of birth rate?

Mr Gue: No.

Concern number 4: Administrative functions, for example, librarian, are inside the PTR, which is thus depressed. This inhibits cost reduction, creates oversize classes. PTR, if it survives, must be revised to mean actual classroom conditions, thus exposing the administrative costs you are trying to reduce, which now hide behind the PTR. What will the government do to blast away this stultifying, anachronistic, counterproductive,

universal obstruction called the PTR which is enshrined in all the labour contracts?

Concern number 5: There is evidence that school councils will be captured by educators. The client of the system, I repeat, is not students, not parents but society, but will the school councils be captured by educators? Education activists and the 70% of Halton residents with no children in the system are sometimes made unwelcome. We feel the same could well happen to the subcommittees under the Education Improvement Commission. Is the government aware of this problem, and what is it doing to overcome it?

Concern number 6: Are boards required to have a contingency plan for reduced funding - boards or whoever is going to look after those kinds of allocations of the available money? Some boards are ignoring it. Will the improvement commission direct that contingency plans be prepared, and provide consultative resources,

since boards can't do it alone.

Concern number 7: Financial statements are unusable and infrequent. Overheads and cross-subsidies are hidden. Subsidiarity and accountability are impossible to determine. Cost reduction made without clear understanding of these things will have serious unintended consequences. Administrations must produce monthly action-oriented, management-friendly accounting reports with full cost accounting for individual programs. We see considerable talk in the draft bill about this, yet none the less we have to ask: What managerial accounting standards will this government demand of administrations? Generally accepted accounting principles, we hope.

Concern number 8: Costs are not generated by boards of trustees but by administrations, some of which have wrested cost control away from their boards. Consolidation supposedly will reduce cost. I hope that's right. But unless other things are done, some of which we deal with in this paper, this won't happen. Trustees themselves, as I'm sure we all know, cost a tiny fraction of 1% of any budget. Some, perhaps most, boards have demonstrated, though, their unwillingness or inability to control the rest of their system cost. How will the government ensure that reduction of boards and their powers does not merely provide administrations with an even less controlled fiscal environment, with the result that costs go up instead of down?

Concern number 9: OSSTF has set about to use classrooms, equipment, supplies, leased lines and services bought with taxpayers' money and, most unforgivable of all, the pupils themselves for crassly political purposes. This is a gross misappropriation of public resources. Will Bill 104 forbid special interest groups to abuse such privileges and to misuse our students to further their own agendas?

To summarize, then, ladies and gentlemen, we have asked you to note that the conflict-of-interest clauses need strengthening and clarifying; the intent of the bill can be served only if the issue of productivity is addressed; the fundamental basis on which school systems are paid had better change; the PTR is a relic that must be discarded before we can move onward; there are threats inherent in school councils and improvement committees; boards must have contingency plans; we need better financial

statements, even better than the act calls for - they're just necessary; boards don't really generate any significant costs at all, their administrations do; and misuse of taxpayers' resources by unions and others must be prevented.

We say again, the basic thrust of Bill 104 is a good one. After years, decades, of studies on studies on studies on studies of education, let's get going. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. We'll answer any questions we can.

Mr Skarica: Thank you, Mr Gue. Referring to concern number 5, you did speak with me earlier and indicated that some people are being made to feel unwelcome on the school councils. Could you elaborate on that the best you can within that minute?

Mr Gue: There is anecdotal evidence of this, and where there's anecdotal evidence I think you apply the principle of where there's smoke, there's fire. The anecdotal evidence is that more than one person who is, shall we say, an education activist or a homeschooler or an outspoken parent or any of the above has been very clearly excluded, not only, in the particular case I'm citing, on a strategic planning council, but on a PTA, a parent-teacher association; simply excluded, not only from a seat but from access to any information and from any privilege of bringing her material to that committee.

Mrs McLeod: I'm not surprised that Mr Skarica raised concern number 5 because, as you say in your notes, he asked you particularly to emphasize that point, and had there been enough time he would probably have asked about concern number 9, which he also had a particular concern about and wanted you to mention.

Mr Gue: I hope I didn't doublecross the Honourable Toni.

Mrs McLeod: I just hadn't realized that we were supposed to prepare those whom we had asked to present to the committee, but I have a question for you because there's -

Interjection.

Mrs McLeod: Hey, this is my minute. I am genuinely interested in asking you a question, though, on some of the innovative ideas you have put forward, including starting to pay teachers on the basis of outputs rather than inputs. You suggest, for example, paying them on a per credit course passed, and I'm wondering if you were to follow that model, how you would reimburse a teacher of a special needs child.

Mr Gue: I don't think I suggested that a teacher be paid on the basis of output. The point you bring up is a very good one. I've had a good deal of contact with special needs and so I know what you're saying. What I am suggesting here, what we would like to see done is that boards, administrations, are funded on an overall basis of graduates per year, and if a board is loaded with ESL or with special ed, special provisions have to be made. It's a long, long subject and you're dead right to bring it up.

Mr Wildman: I want to thank you for a thoughtprovoking presentation. I must say there are a couple of things I agree with, particularly that PTR is outmoded and we shouldn't use it. We should use actual class size in contracts. And you're quite right in terms of the cost

of trustees. Mr Snobelen himself says it will only save \$150 million, which is a sizeable amount but only 1.1% of the total cost of education.

My question is on insiders, your use of the term "insiders." It's pretty obvious that you mean teachers —

Mr Gue: Oh, not only teachers.

Mr Wildman: That's what I want to get to. Teachers are insiders in your view, but my question is, who else might be considered insiders? You say relatives of teachers. How far would this go? Grandchildren? Also, does it include students? Would students be considered insiders? Administrators on boards? Could you define these others, besides teachers and their extended families, whom you view as insiders who would not be allowed to run?

Mr Gue: To answer that I can do no better than to refer you to the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act, which defines people such as spouses, offspring, family members. We have read that act in detail for a reason you may be aware of and we think the definitions there are quite useful. To answer a specific question of yours specifically, no, students would not be considered insiders, but if you want a broad generalization, I could suggest that adults working for the system are probably insiders, be they teachers, be they secretaries, be they whatever.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Gue and Mr Kelso, for taking the time to come out here. I'm sure our parliamentary assistant, Toni Skarica, also appreciated the honourable mention.

Our next presenter is from the North York Board of Education, Ms Gerri Gershon.

Mrs Caplan: While they're coming forward, if I could put a question on the record that the last presenters might want to answer in a letter to the committee since they won't have time. They did mention their concern about the teachers' actions as far as giving information using tax dollars. My question to them is whether they are at all concerned about the highly unprecedented and partisan advertising of the government that the Premier is doing, whether that's a concern about use of tax dollars.

**Mr Gue:** Do you wish me to answer now or in writing, Madam Chair?

The Chair: Since the issue has been raised, do you have a very brief answer?

Mr Gue: I think so. Perhaps I can answer by saying to you that I personally, among many other people, have encouraged the present government to publicize what they are doing. I believe that is a legitimate use of taxpayers' money. I certainly would not consider for a moment, if someone offered it to me, using school facilities to

further the agenda of the taxpayers coalition.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Gue.

#### ONTARIO TEACHERS' FEDERATION

**The Chair:** Ladies and gentlemen, I misspoke myself. The next presenter is the Ontario Teachers' Federation. I wonder if they might come forward. I ask you to identify yourselves, then please proceed.

Mr Bill Martin: I'd like to introduce Susan Langley, who is the secretary-treasurer of the Ontario Teachers' Federation, and Ruth Baumann, who is an executive

assistant. I'm Bill Martin, the president of the Ontario Teachers' Federation.

The Chair: Welcome.

Mr Martin: The Ontario Teachers' Federation is pleased to have the opportunity to appear before the standing committee on social development to present its views and concerns about Bill 104. The federation represents 126,000 teachers — the elementary and secondary school teachers in all of the publicly funded public, separate and French-language schools of the province. The federation itself is a statutory body, established by the government of Ontario in 1944 to "promote and advance the cause of education, to promote and advance the interests of teachers, and to secure conditions that make possible the best professional service."

The federation applauds the creation of the Frenchlanguage school boards for the province but wishes to express its considerable concern with a number of other aspects of the legislation before the committee. The committee is aware, for example, that there is a great deal of dissatisfaction at the board level about the realignment

of the English-language school boards.

Before addressing the specifics of Bill 104, let me briefly address the context in which these changes are occurring from the standpoint of students, teachers and schools. Overall funding for elementary and secondary education in Ontario has been constrained since 1991 and has been steadily reduced since 1993. The number of teachers in our schools has fallen by 4% since 1993. although enrolment has risen by 3% during the same period. Provincial funding for education, as a proportion of total expenditures, has decreased steadily for more than 20 years. It should come as no surprise that in the face of last year's \$800-million annualized cut in provincial spending, a number of school boards were forced to raise local taxes in order to maintain programs such as junior kindergarten and adult education. 1640

There is tremendous anxiety and uncertainty in our classrooms about the future of our schools. What happens as Bill 104 and related issues unfold will have a profound effect on the lives of children and adults who learn and those who teach in our schools. The bundle of announcements from the week of January 13, 1997, will affect school programs, finance, staffing, administration and basic operations. Funding for education, the sources of that funding and the powers and accountability of the local decision-makers are all yet to be determined.

What has been determined is the government's intention to continue with its 30% income tax cut. One has to ask if there is a direct link between this intention and the province assuming full responsibility for education funding. We also have to ask this question in light of the minister's public statements about cutting an additional \$1 billion from elementary and secondary education.

The present situation is like having 200 pieces of a 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle and discovering that the 200 are all blue, presumably the sky, and that the cover with the picture is not there.

In 1995 the federation, in its submission to the Ontario school board restructuring task force, enunciated a set of

principles drawn from the Ontario experience of amalgamations and transfers of responsibilities over the past 30 years. These principles are as follows:

(1) That current teachers' jobs be guaranteed;

(2) That teachers be entitled to a form of contract to which they would have been entitled if there had been no school board reduction/amalgamation;

(3) That there be full recognition of accrued seniority;

(4) That there be full recognition of vested benefits — for example, sick leave credits and service and sick leave gratuities:

(5) That there be full recognition regarding category placement and experience;

(6) That previous collective agreements remain in place until a new agreement is negotiated;

(7) That there be protection against regarding maximum distance for involuntary transfer;

(8) That any saving accruing from amalgamation be

directed to improved learning conditions.

If teachers and other school employees are concerned for the future of their employment in the face of amalgamation, this will affect their performance in the class-room. The legislation introduced by a former Progressive Conservative government in 1968 to manage the process of amalgamation to the present configuration of school boards clearly stated that all contracts, debts, agreements, liabilities and assets of the predecessor entities were transferred to the successors. It made clear as well that this transfer included the transfer of employment contracts and the rights of teachers.

Bill 104 offers no such assurances. Indeed, despite the language remaining in the Education Act from the 1968-69 amalgamation process, Bill 104 specifically mandates the Education Improvement Commission to "identify other key issues that should, in the opinion of the commission, be addressed, including but not limited to issues relating to the distribution of the assets and liabilities of existing boards and the transfer of staff of existing boards, and consider and make recommendations to the minister on those issues."

The generality of these provisions is in marked contrast to the specifics established in 1968-69 which have continued up to this present legislation. Clear assurances from the Minister of Education and Training regarding the security of employment of teachers and other school board employees would be a significant first step in ensuring a reasonable transition.

A further concern arises out of the provisions of section 10 of Bill 104. This section raises the concern that a regulation, transitional or otherwise, made under the Fewer School the Boards Act could be used to override the provisions of School Boards and Teachers Collective Negotiations Act and the Ontario Labour Relations Act. We have a significant concern regarding the legal validity of such provisions which appear to grant the cabinet the authority to override duly passed legislation by the enactment of a regulation.

While the federation supports the concept of local education improvement committees to oversee specific local issues, we seek greater assurance that teachers and other employees, through their representative organizations, will be included on the local committees and will

play a significant role in determining the specifics of the transition of the new board in their area. That being said, and recognizing that local solutions are generally preferable to one-size-fits-all solutions, local solutions are only possible if basic principles and frameworks are first established at the provincial level with the participation of stakeholders. Such provincial principles and frameworks would guarantee a foundation of consistency beyond which local variation is possible.

The following are critical questions which comprise the

other 80% of the puzzle, the missing pieces:

(1) What authority will school boards have to raise revenues to finance local decisions regarding the operation of schools?

(2) How can the government ensure that the supervisory powers of the Education Improvement Commission are not employed in a fashion that is unduly intrusive or disruptive to the ongoing operation of the schools and the education system?

(3) What means is the government prepared to undertake to ensure reasonable access for communities to their elected trustees? This is a particular concern in some of the very large geographic areas to be covered by a school

board.

(4) What resources are available from the government to facilitate the reconciliation of different programs and priorities among communities which will now form amalgamated school boards? Following is a list of items identified in 1969 as pertinent to this process: the school program, administration, property, professional development, personnel, special services and finance.

(5) How will the boundaries and populations to be served be reviewed in order to make determinations

which make good educational sense?

(6) How will the government guarantee that any changes to be made to the overall financing of education will be revenue-neutral in total — the sum of provincial and local contributions?

(7) What support will be made available to new amalgamated school boards to enable them to develop effective meeting and communication mechanisms across

long distances and multiple communities?

A reduction in the number of school boards, in and of itself, should not spark a crisis for the system. The crisis of the moment arises from the perceived intentions of this government towards its public institutions. It is a crisis of confidence and trust which results directly from the persistent attacks made by the representatives of the government, including the Minister of Education and Training, on the services delivered by those institutions. It is a crisis exacerbated when the government definition of "classroom" includes teachers and classroom computers but excludes principals, custodial services and utilities such as heat and electricity. The clear implication from the minister is that these are non-essential, that they are frills.

Last week a teacher in Thunder Bay, participating in a dialogue on professional issues with colleagues from around the province, asked, "Have all of the recent government moves with closure motions limited and clearly ignored pro forma public forums on fundamental social changes, forced the public and educators into a

'circle the wagons' syndrome with little ventured or risked?"

In my school and my board I seem to see fewer meetings this year and most are in reaction to changes. Do you see the same drawing back, less risk-taking behaviour and less innovation? Are we all becoming like frightened deer caught in the glare of the oncoming traffic, frozen in place and surely to be hit and left as roadkill at the side of the legislative high-speed superhighway?

A reduction in the number of school boards undertaken by the government, perceived to be hostile to the very concepts of local control and shared decision-making in a framework essentially void of any basic principles other than "fewer school boards, less money and outsourcing," sounds alarm bells throughout the community. Major transitions of governance and restructuring require an environment of mutual respect, confidence and trust in order to succeed in the face of many organizational and technical barriers.

Having the education finance formulae and possible changes to collective bargaining before us now would greatly relieve the anxiety that currently exists among teachers, parents, school boards and the public in general.

The number of school boards in Ontario can only be reduced successfully with the co-operation and trust of educators and of the communities they serve. The trust must be earned through respect for the value of our work, fair dealing and common sense. We anxiously await the rest of the jigsaw puzzle.

1650

Mrs McLeod: You asked the question, "Will there be any taxation power for school boards?" The proposal appears to be that there would not be any taxation power. Is it feasible to think that collective bargaining can be carried out even past the harmonization questions? How can you carry out collective bargaining with school boards that don't have any power to pay for the consequent —

Mr Martin: I think you're absolutely correct that collective bargaining will become a critical issue. It's best to negotiate with the person who holds the purse. However, if collective bargaining leaves the local area, it's going to be a shame for education. I think local issues are determined locally through the collective bargaining process. It's worked in the past and it should continue to work in the future. It's the only way local needs can be addressed.

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much for your presentation. Could you give us some idea of your view as to the reasons for the different approach taken by this Conservative government as opposed to the Bill Davis government in 1968 in terms of the way they went about the amalgamations dealing with the concerns of teachers and others involved in the system? Do you have any idea of why the difference?

Mr Martin: The consultation process of this government, when compared to Mr Davis's government in 1968, is obviously lacking greatly. I believe this government has made up its mind. They have set their course. They refuse to listen to the public or anybody else out there as

far as their direction is concerned. They are steamrolling these hearings and they'll steamroll the legislation, and once all the dust settles, people in Ontario will finally realize they're further behind than we are currently as far as our educational system is concerned.

Mr Carroll: Mr Martin, you talked about the tremendous anxiety in our classrooms about the future of education. Is that situation being helped by OSSTF's current initiative to try to bring their union argument into the classroom?

Mr Martin: I'm not going to discuss OSSTF's issues but I can tell you, as a principal last year in an Etobicoke school with a population of 700 students, multicultural and 40 staff members, the anxiety of teachers is out there and it is extremely high. I had many young teachers coming into my office on a regular basis, saying: "Am I going to have a job tomorrow? Are my class sizes going to continue to rise? Am I going to maintain my benefits? What is going to happen with the educational system?" There is anxiety. I'm not going to comment on OSSTF's propaganda.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Martin, Ms Langley and Ms Baumann for being here. Thank you very much for coming this afternoon.

#### NORTH YORK BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: Our next presenter from the North York Board of Education, at long last, is Ms Gerri Gershon. Welcome, Ms Gershon. As you take your seats, I ask you to introduce your co-presenters.

Ms Gerri Gershon: Madam Chair, members of the committee, my name is Gerri Gershon. I'm the chair of the North York Board of Education. With me today is Judi Codd, vice-chair of the board, and our director, Marguerite Jackson. In the audience are trustees Waese and Churchill.

I want to share with you a tale of two governments, one very large and centralized, the other smaller and more local.

At the small, local government, the North York Board of Education, the board recommended moving the gifted program from one school to the next. Such a decision meant that several hundred children would have to change schools. At the school board level, issues like this raised concern with parents. Parents whose children were affected by the proposal made at least four separate presentations to the board. They sat with trustees on implementation committees for more than six months. In short, parents were consulted on all aspects of the proposed change.

This is just one example of how our board works with the local community to solve problems. Some, like the opening of schools, are very pleasant; others, like the closing of schools, are not.

As school boards, we do the best we can to respond to our communities. But doing our best means involving parents in decisions. Doing our best means having parents work alongside trustees and board officials. Our best does not mean that parents get just a few moments to make a one-time presentation. It does not mean that parents have to demonstrate on our front lawn to be heard.

At the large, centralized government here at Queen's Park, Bill 104 and the government's related education restructuring announcements are the most significant changes in education in more than 150 years. Several days are set aside for hearings and the North York board has been given 15 minutes — just 15 minutes — its first and last time to comment on this legislation, and this from a board which serves Canada's sixth-largest city and is a pioneer and an innovator in many aspects of educational excellence.

I'm not trying to be critical of your work. As a trustee, I've often sat on the other side of the table. But the tale of two governments does illustrate the realities of big government versus small government, of centralized government versus local government. Are we seeing the difference between the way the North York Board of Education operates now and the way it may have to operate in the future - as one large, centralized decisionmaking mega-board for Metro Toronto?

School boards and parents are natural partners, not adversaries. The more that parents are involved with their children's education, in their total education, the better their children do in school. But you will change this relationship by creating a governance structure far removed from the reality of teaching and learning, far removed from the parents and the communities we serve.

I'm not here today to tell you that you should not reduce the number of school boards in Metropolitan Toronto or the number of school trustees in our city, but I am here to tell you that how you are planning to do it

is wrong.

The creation of a mega public school board in Metro is a mistake and one that will forever change the way parents and the public in general relate to their school system. In short, one mega public board for Metro Toronto is amalgamation to the extreme — amalgamation

gone overboard.

Bill 104 has some good intentions. To reduce school boards' costs and place more money in the classroom is a goal shared by all educators and the public. In the past five years, Metro's public boards have been pursuing this goal. For example, we have created a Metro-wide purchasing and warehousing cooperative. This cooperative model will soon be used to deliver computer services and, in time, many other administrative and non-instructional services of school boards may be provided in the same manner.

This is the evolution of school board services in Metro Toronto; it is a future where cost savings are achieved through reducing duplication while, at the same time, ensuring local decision-making, local responsiveness and local accountability to our communities.

Unfortunately, Bill 104 places the goal of cost reductions well ahead of the importance of the boards' ability to be locally responsive. This is especially true in the proposed new Toronto district public school board. This mega-board will serve more than 300,000 students and more than 500 schools.

Bill 104 will create a school board in Metro the size never before contemplated in Canada. It will create a board three times larger than the largest board in Canada and three times larger than its coterminous Metro separate school board.

Why create a school board so large? Why sacrifice public participation in their school system to save a few extra dollars, maybe, especially when the people of Metro Toronto can benefit from both local decision-making and

cost savings?

What is the rationale for a mega-board? It seems clear that the mega-board is a creature of the megacity. Somehow just because a Who Does What panel says that a school board's jurisdiction should be aligned to a municipal jurisdiction, so it will be done, no questions asked, no matter how it works, no matter if it works, no matter if the services provided by municipalities and school boards are wholly different, no matter what the consequences for public participation, access and ability to influence their local school board.

I must tell you that of all those who studied and were commissioned to study school board amalgamation — the Royal Commission on Learning, former Minister of Education Tom Wells and former cabinet minister John Sweeney - not one ever proposed the creation of one school board to serve nearly 20% of Ontario's school-age

population.

Mr Sweeney's School Board Reduction Task Force conducted the most thorough of all the recent studies on school board amalgamation. In his final report he recommended the reduction of 50% of the school boards, but his proposed boundaries for Metro Toronto did not - I repeat "did not" - recommend one public school board for Metro Toronto. In fact he recommended four public school board jurisdictions. Why? Because as a result of his public consultation, and based on his own intimate knowledge of school board operations, it is clear that there are consequences to creating a very large school board.

The decisions of school boards do have an impact on the operations of schools and on the educational welfare of students. Decisions pertaining to additional portables, transportation hearings, expulsion hearings, approval of expenditures for new programs, disciplinary action, cannot be bottlenecked and delayed for months on end. These decisions have a bearing on schools and particularly on students: real people, real consequences for delays.

I urge the committee to reconsider the issue of creating one mega public school board in Metro on its own merits and not simply because it is the easiest thing to do or

because it simply matches the megacity.

Adequate public involvement in and access to the decision-making process of governments at all levels has

a pricetag and it's worth every penny.

I urge the committee to place the needs of students and the interests of parents right alongside the cost benefits associated with amalgamating school boards. If you examine school board amalgamation in Metro Toronto from this standpoint, I believe you will reject the megaboard in favour of a reconfiguration of Metro public school board's jurisdiction into a four- or a three-board

Let me turn very briefly to the establishment of the Education Improvement Commission. I would like to make one general observation about the commission. For a government in a parliamentary democracy to draft legislation which allows unelected individuals to override the decision of elected representatives is a sign that we take our democratic liberties for granted. To hold unelected individuals accountable to no one, not even the courts, is oppressive and repulsive.

I say to the committee, come clean on the accountability of the commission. Make it report directly to an elected body and allow the public to have political and legal recourse to its decisions. This is the right and

honourable thing to do.

I want to make only a few brief comments about the role of school trustees. Going back to the introduction of Bill 104, I think part of the legislation has been sold to the public on the backs of school board members. I think the government has enjoyed putting the boots to school trustees. What can we do? After all, the government knows that politicians at any level are unpopular, so why not feed into the public's sentiments and get rid of a few more?

When the Minister of Education announced the education restructuring package on January 13, he said of trustees: "The role of trustees will be to provide policy direction and support — not to be the hands-on, day-to-day managers in the schools." This is of course completely misleading and, I think, a mean-spirited slight against school trustees.

Trustees are not managers of schools, just as MPPs are not the managers of government. But I know you will agree with me that the management in government, like the management in school boards, must be accountable to the public. In many cases, this is where elected officials come in. Yes, we set policies, but we are also an advocate for the public. We provide the check and balance for decisions, especially those relating to expenditures and the fair treatment of our citizens.

Hands-on when it comes to education? I'd like to think so. Knowledgeable? I hope so. Informed? Most definitely. Yes, it's true that some trustees will work harder than others and for longer hours, but the same thing holds true for MPPs. Yes, it's true that trustees will interpret their role in different ways. There is no set job description for people in public service. One tries one's best and one devotes as much time as possible.

I know that most MPPs are not in public service for the money, but there is reasonable compensation for your time. Some MPPs have other professions and some do not. Trustees should also receive reasonable compensation. I can't think of a trustee serving in a major urban centre with a large constituency whose efforts would be

valued at \$5,000. I really can't.

Finally, I want to close with comments on what is undoubtedly an important concern that the public has about the future of education, but it is not really covered

in this legislation.

By taking education off the residential property tax base, the government has dislodged more than \$1.3 billion from Metro's school systems. Will the students in Metro ever see all this money back in their classrooms? Will the Ontario government return this money in the

form of grants to Metro's school systems? If our schools get all the money back, what is the purpose of this entire exercise?

The North York Board of Education is very concerned that this money will not come back to Metro's schools, and this committee should be concerned as well.

First, the minister said he was going to cut a further \$1 billion from education; now apparently he won't. Which is it?

Surely the purpose of reducing the number of school boards is that dollars saved will go back into educating young people? Will this in fact happen, or is this whole exercise really about achieving the single largest tax grab from our school system?

I would like to know the answers to these questions, and I know that parents would like to know the answers. I hope before Bill 104 becomes law, every member of the Legislature would want to know as well. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Gershon. Unfortunately, you've exhausted the time and there is no opportunity for the committee members to be able to ask questions. May I say, as an MPP from North York, what a terrific board I think you are, if I may be allowed just a little bias on occasion. Thank you very much for appearing before us this afternoon.

1710

#### SPIROS PAPATHANASAKIS

The Chair: Our next presenter is Spiros Papathanasakis. Welcome. You're just in time. We'll let you take off your coat and you can get started.

Mr Spiros Papathanasakis: Sorry. I had a problem in one of my schools.

The Chair: I'm sure you'll tell us about it.

Mr Papathanasakis: My name is Spiros Papathanasakis and I'm a trustee with the Toronto Board of Education, ward 7. I'm the father of five school-age children. I've been involved with the Cabbagetown Youth Centre since 1973 as its executive director. I was also one of the original members of the Ontario Parent Council. As you can see, my personal and professional life is committed to children.

I'm here to talk to you today because I want you to remember the children in the community I'm going to tell you about when you are making financial decisions. I'm not going to talk to you a lot about this bill right now, but I want you to remember my community.

I grew up in ward 7. My family has lived in ward 7 for 40 years. I want to tell you a little bit about the community. Some 45% of the families are below the low-income level for the rest of Toronto. I want you to picture some of the things that happen in my community.

I hope there's not a lot of press here. I don't want to badmouth my community, but a lot of the kids I've worked with in the past see their parents fighting because they're unemployed; there's a lot of stress in their families.

The density in my ward: Some parts of my ward are probably the most dense in this country. If you can picture to the east, I have St James Town, Regent Park and the Cabbagetown area. The 1991 stat for one of my

areas, St James Town, was 65,000 per square kilometre in just that little area. I don't know if some of you know that area. Our projections a few years ago were 400 at Rose Avenue school. Next year 830 kids will be in this JK-to-grade-6 school, so I believe our projections are over 100,000 people. The rest of Toronto is about 7,000.

I want you to picture in your minds in the morning — I know this is a fact because I do a lot of volunteer work in those buildings. You have 10 people in a two-bedroom. I want you to think about the children and yourselves trying to get to the washroom in the morning. That's a crazy example, but it's a real example, people fighting to get to the washrooms. I want you to picture them trying to get through crowded elevators or not having any hot water because there are so many people who have doubled up in those apartments. I can keep going on and on about that one.

Single parents: We have over 30% single parents in many parts of my ward. You know, some of you who have two parents in your families, how tough it is to get

by these days.

Crime: I don't want you really to remember me because of these stats, but I've got to tell them to you. If you read in the newspaper a couple weeks ago, I'm the guy, my ward, where a 12-year-old shot the taxicab driver for \$25. I'm the guy a few weeks before that, in my ward, I was sitting with a few sergeants discussing some of the problems and they had to take off because some guy was chasing somebody with a gun. I'm the guy in my ward where those two prostitutes were shot in the head and the kids had to walk right by them in the morning to go to school.

I don't know if you remember those stories in our newspapers. That's my ward. It's not the safest environment for the kids in my ward and schools make a great

difference for those kids.

Suicides: I was looking at the newspaper yesterday and it said the Liberal government was going to go ahead with this community action program for children. We have a CAPC in my area. One of the things the people wanted us to be able to talk about was, how do you relate to suicides? What happens when somebody has a suicide that lives next door to part of your family?

I was doing some research a couple of years ago. We have the highest suicide rate in the province of Ontario in my area. One day I had to run to get two kids so they wouldn't go home at lunchtime, because their dad had just jumped from one of those buildings. I was just

freaked out about that.

The diversity: It's probably the most diverse ward in Ontario. I know those people not only have a problem with the language. It's funny, it's very interesting. I'm a public school trustee and I've organized five ESL classes with the separate school board in a sub-basement for

these people, so I know them very well.

These people don't feel they have a voice. They don't know what their rights are. They don't have proper green space, they don't have services and they don't know that. I don't want to kill the issue. Yesterday we were in the mayor's committee talking about how it's crazy to build three more high-rise buildings there, that the city of Toronto is planning to do. They're at the OMB right now

and the developers are getting the right to build three more buildings. This would not happen in any other area. It's just crazy what is happening, but these people don't have a voice and that's what happens.

These problems are a fact of life for many people in my community. When you look at a multirisk community

like mine and you take poverty, the overcrowding, the density, the chronic unemployment, these factors are overwhelming. Learning is at risk here. We at the Toronto board have some very highly successful ways of supporting our children in doing their best academically. These are low costs and high returns. We want you to consider some of these things.

The ed assistants, the teacher's aides we have who help these kids in the classroom: I know that in some places these people aren't valued, but I'll tell you something, going through my schools, I know what a difference they make, and a lot of them are from the community.

Nutrition programs: I don't know; I was brought up in this community and there were five of us to one bedroom. I never had anybody feeding me. I would rather not eat sometimes than get help, but these kids really need the help. I never thought I would be telling people this about people, but they need the help. They're really struggling. I know this because I've got five kids and I know they tell me that a lot of kids don't have food at lunchtime, and my kids share their lunches. So I know it's a fact. Some people you've probably talked to tell you all kinds of fuzzy-wuzzy things, but when I tell you something, it's right on, because I'm right there and I can see it.

Parenting centres: There are 7,000 families that are being served in our parenting centres. I don't want to be written up in the Toronto Star. My wife is a parenting worker; I'm telling you up front. She's been doing it for 10 years and she has shown me the difference, what parenting does. They help teach the parents literacy before they get to school, because most of these kids need the help before they get to school, in the environment they are in.

They get them involved in our schools. A lot of the people who are involved in the parent councils have gone through the parenting centres. These parenting centres are in inner-city schools. These are three examples of low-cost, highly successful initiatives, which make all the difference for children coming from disadvantaged

backgrounds.

I haven't said much about the bill because my passion is for the children. I stayed up all night looking at this bill and what it meant to me. I'm not really going to focus on this bill, which I should. I hope the EIC isn't just another layer of bureaucracy that will slow decisions down for the kids. I've only been a trustee for two years and I've got to tell you something. When things need to be done, I already think they're too slow in our system. This organization: I don't know how good it's going to be. It depends who's on it and what they're going to do. I just hope they don't slow things down.

The part about extraordinary enforcement powers: My background is Greek and the word "democracy" came from Greece, so I don't think it's right, but I've got to tell you something. I wish my colleague and I, Soo

Wong, had some of these powers a year ago when we were taking the school board on. I don't think it's right, but I wish I had those powers. I don't know what that says about us, but we were praying for something like that.

1720

Interjection: Maybe you're toast.

Mr Papathanasakis: Yes, toast.

Restriction of school board powers: The part in the bill where they look at our budgets — what is it? — month by month, the staff won't like that because it's going to be a hassle for them. But I don't even have a problem with that. It probably makes us more accountable. Every time I make a decision, it's for the kids, and I make sure it's fiscally responsible. I treat the school board's money like I would — how we grew up, we were very poor and we made sure that we treated it like it was our money. I don't spend it just for the sake of spending it.

A problem that has occurred right now — and these are some of the problems I might have, but it's probably because it hasn't started. I don't know how much time it will take to go to the EIC. One example of a problem that we've had is a school called Contact. We put up purchasing for some land and we put a condition that we had to go through this body and we lost the building.

That's part of the down side of that.

I invite you to ask me any questions. I ask you to remember the kids in the inner city. I didn't come here to say yes, I agree with this, or to whine, but I really wanted for you, when you're making decisions in the future, to think about my neighbourhood. Everybody's been worried that we're going to get annihilated and we're going to lose a lot of money from Metro Toronto. I trust you'll do a good job and you'll be fair with everybody in Ontario, but when you're making these decisions, that you understand there is a difference. I talk to people all over Ontario, and we have probably the neediest community in this country when you take everything into account. That's all I want you to remember. These kids need some extra help when you're doing the funding allocation.

I don't have anything else to say.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Papathanasakis. You've used your 15 minutes very well and we thank you. There won't be any time for questions, unfortunately, but we thank you and your colleague, Soo Wong, for attending here today.

Mr Preston: That was a great presentation.

#### R.H. McGREGOR SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Chair: Our next presenter is from the R.H. McGregor School Advisory Council, Pamela Grant. Welcome. I would ask you to present your co-presenter. It's nice to see a little one here at these hearings.

Pamela Grant: Before I start, I'd just like to introduce the people you see here with me. My alternate chair, Nicholas Russon, is a parent at R.H. McGregor School. Sean Hayes is another parent and member of our school advisory council at McGregor. Probably why we're all here is one of the younger students at R.H. McGregor, my daughter, Gillian, who is benefiting from kindergarten at the moment.

I think what I'd like to do really sincerely, on behalf of the R.H. McGregor School community, our school advisory council would like to thank the committee members for allowing us the opportunity to be heard. We know that we're very privileged to be able to do that because the process has not allowed for too much of that.

R.H. McGregor is a junior public school — that's junior kindergarten through to grade 5 — with a population of 715 students, situated in the heart of the only borough in this country, East York. Our school is a microcosm of the range and diversity of essential programs and resources necessary for quality education in the classroom in an urban setting in the province of Ontario.

There are many aspects of the current system — but I think I must stop and add that right now that has already undergone massive cuts — that we like and we feel are essential. I'm going to use that word "essential" a lot in this presentation, because I'm not here to talk to you about things that are frills, add-ons, I'm here to talk about essential programming and programs that take place in our community that we'd like to see maintained. So we feel that these programs are essential and therefore we need to maintain them, and we need to maintain them in order to keep a strong public school system.

I'm going to spend some time just going through the things we like about the system, things that are working

for us.

We like that our trustees are knowledgeable about our community and that they're accessible and accountable to us as parents. They're just a phone call away and they actively participate in our school advisory council meetings and our home and school meetings with very little notice. We also like the positive experiences we've had working with the East York Board of Education staff. For example, they provided leadership and support in the resolution of a potentially explosive local parking issue that involved bringing together parents, the school, the board, local residents and the municipality.

We like the broad range of programs that are available to all students in the system: ESL/D, French immersion, junior kindergarten, special education programming etc.

We like the fact that our caretakers are known to us and our children, and that they are on hand to clear snow and salt the walkways during a snowfall or even to quickly clear away the inevitable dangerous messes from illness that children make in the classroom and in the hallways. In addition, our caretakers look after our buildings and grounds, help us as parents and monitor evening activities in the school.

We like being able to visit our children's classroom teacher and having him or her take the time to discuss

our children's progress.

But we're afraid. What we're afraid of is that with the implementation of Bill 104, there are a number of things that we'll have to be further afraid of. What I want to do is list for you some of the many fears that we have.

We fear that there will be a lack of representation and access to decision-making, whether it be through the new trustee system or at the board level.

We fear that there won't be enough money for essential programming and that we will be put in the no-win situation of having to pit one essential program against or over another. Do we drop junior kindergarten to maintain programs such as French immersion? Our school is a French immersion school. The population is basically 50-50: English and French immersion. Do we have a music program and not a phys ed program? Do we do away with the libraries so that we can have computer labs? I

We fear that we will lose the essential support of psychologists, social workers, special education consultants, learning-disabled and gifted program practitioners, and education assistants. The work of these people impacts directly on what happens in the classroom.

We fear that by taking our property taxes and putting them into the provincial pot, we will not have access to our own funds to ensure that they go towards our local education needs. Education is still a local issue, that hasn't changed, and we believe that local taxes should be directed to local education needs. Otherwise it is tantamount to taking money out of the education system, or more specifically, taking money out of the classroom.

We fear that if we want to have music, we'll have to pay, and if we want to have physical education in addition to music, we'll have to pay more. This violates the basic principle of what public education is in this province and it leads to the kind of charter school system where those who have access to money get more. This is Ontario; it's not New Jersey.

We fear that we will be pitting our school's needs against neighbouring schools' needs for scarce money and resources. We fear that larger class sizes will result in insufficient time for teachers to deal with individual children, their needs and their parents' needs.

We fear a lack of capital dollars for preventive maintenance in the schools: repair and replacement of desks, chairs, lights, heat, air filters etc, facility maintenance and expansion, including the issue of portables versus new facilities.

We fear a lack of quality support services for the facilities, where known, permanent caretakers will be replaced by privately contracted workers, who because they are not on duty at all times, will not be able to respond to the myriad of day-to-day, moment-by-moment maintenance needs. This would be both a safety and a security issue for our children. The inevitable turnover of contract workers would lead to strangers roaming the hallways of our school.

We fear public access and use of school facilities in off-hours will cease and will be out of our control if at 4 pm the doors of the school close. Our school will no longer be the community school we want it to be.

We fear that the process of transition is not transparent and that the Education Improvement Commission is neither accountable nor accessible to anyone. We won't be able to bring an injunction against them and we can't sue them after the fact. It appears they've already been granted their pardon. It begs the question: Why is it necessary to grant them immunity? They're not elected and will be in charge of taxpayers' money, my money.

We fear that the integration of special education/special needs programming into the classroom at a time when support staff are being removed from the classroom is a recipe for disaster, not improvement in the quality of our children's education. It will also place an undue burden on teachers.

Those are some of the fears that we have and what my colleagues and I want to leave you with this evening are some of the questions we need to have answered, and I think other parents across the province need to have answered.

(1) What is your vision of new governance? What is the role of the school advisory councils, really? What will they do, really? What will they look like? Can school advisory councils have liability without accountability?

(2) Can we really be sure that bigger is better? There are few school boards this size in North America.

(3) Will public education be a tiered, multi-tiered system?

(4) Will our MPPs, in this case John Parker and David Johnson, answer our phone calls about the school system since the province will he controlling the money?

(5) Who now owns the buildings and property bought

and paid for by the taxpayers of East York?

(6) Will our children truly become citizens of the world as a result of the changes proposed by Bill 104? Those are some of the questions and I'd just again like

to take this opportunity to thank you for having a chance to heard.

Mr Wildman: I really enjoyed your presentation and the way you did it. Could I ask you, you talked about what you like in your school and what's good for your students and your community and what you are afraid of. It sounds to me, and correct me if I'm wrong, that what you're really afraid of is losing the access to the people who make decisions about your school, and you're afraid of losing the community aspect of your school and the involvement you've been able to develop. Is that a fair description, if you want to put it in sort of a nutshell?

Pamela Grant: Yes, and in a more pointed way, I think there's a fear that we will no longer be a relevant part of the process of decision-making around all the issues that are of importance to us and our children. It's that we've been sidelined or buffered off, and that really is a sentiment. I think.

Mr Wildman: Do you think you need to have full-time trustees dealing with the group of schools that the trustee deals with in your ward, or could you have a trustee who is getting an honorarium of \$5,000 and works at this part-time and is dealing with a larger number of schools and still have the kind of access and influence that you believe you now have?

Pamela Grant: In a word, no.

Mr Wildman: Well, should you have?

Pamela Grant: Our trustees spend a great deal of time doing the work that they do, and I think that has to be valued. I think previous speakers have talked about the relish with which the present government has really stuck the boot — and these are not my words, this is what a previous presenter said — to people who for the most part have committed a fair amount of time, interest and work in support of our children in the system.

That's not to say that there is no room for change and improvement, but I would hesitate to promote any new system that would take away the role of having a trustee or individuals who know the community and are familiar with the issues and can participate in the process of decision-making and represent the community.

Mr Wildman: When they get close to \$50,000, you

don't consider that ripping off the system?

Pamela Grant: I don't know who does that. That's not the situation in our community.

Mr Carroll: Thank you, Ms Grant, for your presentation. You said East York, wasn't it?

Pamela Grant: Yes.

**Mr Carroll:** Obviously in East York there are also some separate schools, I presume. Are there?

Pamela Grant: That serve that area, yes. There are

separate schools that serve that area.

Mr Carroll: And they would have the same demographics and so on as the public schools would have, because they are operating in the same general geo-

graphic area.

You seem like a very fair person to me, as I listened to your presentation. The children in East York and in all of Metro Toronto who fall under one separate school board, the average cost per student is \$6,472 a year. For the children that fall under the six public boards in the same demographic area of Toronto, the average cost is \$7,984, which is another \$1,512. As a fair person, do you think that all of the students in Metropolitan Toronto should have access to the same amount of funding for their education?

Pamela Grant: As a fair person, my response to you is that I would certainly weigh much more carefully and take the time to sort those kinds of questions out before I launched a Bill 104. It's not altogether clear to me that anything in Bill 104 addresses what I expect you're trying to get at with your question. So that's my answer. 1740

Mrs McLeod: I would probably rephrase Mr Carroll's question in asking you whether or not you would think that everybody should get less in order to create some

equity of funding.

Pamela Grant: I think there are two issues that you have to deal with. Again, as a fair person, I would never try to deal with essential programming and need by looking at a dollar figure. And so, as I try to work to balance, if I were in the position of decision-making, that would be what moved my decision-making and not looking at a set of numbers here and another set of numbers there. I'd be looking at quality of programming, and that would be the important thing to me.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate that, because I think sometimes the questions that are being asked around the table pit the sense of fairness and equity of each of us against the actual needs of kids. I think that's what you were trying to bring out in your brief, and I think that's what many other presenters in the last two days have tried to bring out, that there are real needs of kids, and people are worried about how they're going to be

responded to.

Like Mr Wildman, I appreciated the fact that you went into detail about different aspects of the way in which

Bill 104 could affect kids in the classroom, including things like the outsourcing, and what it means to kids in a classroom to have that continuity of janitorial care and what it means to their safety. I had not picked up on the fact that of course one of the consequences of finding efficiencies in that area could be the loss of a community school, and I appreciate your drawing that out.

I'm also very appreciative of your talking about the special needs integration. Just as a starting point, in case the government suggests that the funding is a different issue and we're going to meet all the needs of kids, when they found their \$150 million in their consultant's report, ministry figures, one of the figures they had to use in order to get to \$150 million to save on amalgamation was \$1.3 million in something called education support, which basically is the very people you're talking about, the support people that provide support for special needs kids to be in integrated classes. So I think your fears are legitimate, based on the objective evidence that's already come forward.

I guess just lastly, if there's time —

The Chair: There isn't time, Ms McLeod. We're out of time.

Mrs McLeod: The next time, we'll discuss charter schools.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Grant, and Gillian, thank you for coming especially. We're glad to have you here, and Mr Russon and Mr Hayes. Thanks very much for your presentation.

#### SCARBOROUGH BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: The next presenter is from the Scarborough Board of Education, Ms Dale. Thank you very much for joining us. I'd ask you to introduce your copresenter. You have 15 minutes to make your presentation.

Gaye Dale: Madam Chair and members of the committee, first of all, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity of being able to speak to you on this important issue.

As already identified — I know you're probably at the point of no return by this time in the day, I know what meetings are like, so I just want to say I represent the Scarborough — agreed? — Board of Education, the largest public school board in Metropolitan Toronto and the public board with the highest incidence of students requiring ESL support in the area and, to our knowledge, the country.

As someone who has taken on the duty of trusteeship, it should be unnecessary for me to have to say that my first concern is for the welfare of the children attending our schools. I'll say it anyway. I'll try and organize my presentation under three major concerns.

First, it is essential, if we are going to have a unified board, that we carefully look at the ramifications as we go through the process. If that's the way of the future, we have to ensure that we receive the special funding needed to adequately address the unique needs of its student population.

Let me suggest to you what some of those unique needs are. One of the most diverse communities in the world and a community that works because of its public education system, our system has demonstrated the capacity to respond to the needs of our students. Our students are made up in large part of newcomers to Canada: 55% of all immigrants to Canada since 1986 have chosen to live in Ontario, and 60% to 70% of this group live in Metropolitan Toronto. Immigrant students require language skills and/or the opportunity to adapt to a new country. Refugee students require support for disrupted educations and lives.

Of Scarborough's 82,000 students, a third have been in the country less than four years. Current research conducted by Dr Cummings of OISE suggests that new-comers require five to seven years in order to function as well as they would in their own native country. Based on these figures, educators in Scarborough are supporting 27,000 immigrant students on their journey to becoming

fully functioning Canadians.

One group in our diverse community are children living in poverty, children who are disadvantaged when they walk through the door of a school. We understand from the work of Dr Dan Offord that poor children, children living on assistance in subsidized housing in single-parent families, are far more likely to experience behavioural and academic difficulties. Metro Toronto has the highest concentration of subsidized housing units in all of Ontario. Within Metro, the highest concentration is in Scarborough. One in three children in Metro lives on social assistance and 25% of families are led by a lone parent. The Scarborough board has focused significant resources to support disadvantaged children and will require absolute assurance that their needs will continue to be met regardless.

The number of children requiring special education support has increased over the last decade. When one looks Metro-wide at a school population of 300,000, research would suggest that upwards of 45,000 students may require special education support during their education careers. This number easily exceeds the number of many school boards in Ontario, and we would hope that these children would not be forgotten in any reorganization.

Violent youth crime is on the rise in Metro Toronto and is a particular concern of Scarborough and our schools. The Scarborough Board of Education has taken a leadership role in assuring students a safe and secure learning environment. We do not believe that parents will settle for any less under any circumstances.

The needs of Metro Toronto are clearly reflected in Scarborough. In fact, I would suggest to you that they are somewhat magnified within my community. The Scarborough Board of Education can lay claim to a range of significant achievements with immigrant, refugee and disadvantaged students. Our concern for the future lies entirely with our students. We will not stand in the way of progress but will definitely stand in opposition to any actions which we believe diminish the opportunities of our students.

Key to our concern is that any future funding formulas for Metro should be equitable across all communities within Metro. The needs of all students must be recognized as the needs, desires and aspirations of our communities. I hope you have recognized my plea for the unique needs of Metro and Scarborough students, as well as my desire to seek equitable funding in any new formula.

In addition, I would also like to speak to the needs of staff — I have over 8,000 employees — who appear to be more protected in consideration of municipal reform than in educational reform. I speak to clause 8 of the municipal bill, Bill 103, that doesn't seem to be the same in Bill 104.

I would like to leave you with three questions:

Will the unique needs of Metro students be adequately recognized within the funding allocation model?

Will moneys be allocated equally across all areas of Metro?

Will board of education staff, both unionized and non-unionized, receive the same protection that is afforded to municipal staff under Bill 103?

Thank you. I've provided you with a package that has already been distributed within Scarborough, addressing programs that we feel are important. Not included in there are special education children, who we obviously feel are really important, and I have to stress that we really consider that one of the important aspects of our programming. We will forward on to you any further information from us.

Mr Froese: Thank you for your presentation. When we look at the whole issue of amalgamation of boards, bureaucracies, school structures and so on and so forth, you've been involved a number of years in your board, I would presume?

**Gaye Dale:** Actually, I've been involved two years as a trustee and 15 years prior to that as a parent in the system

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Mr Froese: So you're very aware of the whole education structure in our province. I find it kind of difficult to swallow, some of the questions from the opposition. This is not just a problem that we face as a government in education; it's been there for years and everybody has been looking at it. There have been a number of commissions and committees and reports coming out of our ears with respect to this.

As a matter of fact, in the last election, the Liberals—and I have the red book right here—said they would be doing some of the same things that we're doing now. They would establish local school councils that would help shift the decision-making out of the hands of the bureaucracies and into the hands of the parents. They would reduce the number of trustees. They would define the role of school boards. They would encourage school boards to increase efficiencies and reduce costs by sharing expenses and looking for opportunities to share services, which is outsourcing, in my opinion. The former government and Mr Cooke, who is now co-chair of the EIC, commissioned the Sweeney report, and they were going to do some of the same things.

Everybody knows something has to be done and the two previous governments were going to do the same things. I'd like to know your comments on that, and specifically also with respect to, if we strengthen the roles of the parent councils, and that's one way of doing it, and in Bill 104 we talk about doing that, can you give

us some guidance and information? How do we do that to be successful?

Gaye Dale: At this point, I'm going to speak from a background that maybe not everyone can. I've been through the Scarborough board three times so far. I'm on my fourth try with my third child. I personally went through the system myself and I went through with my two older children.

My concern about parental involvement is that, in my school, representation was wonderful. We had active parents, we had parents in the classroom, but not every school within my Scarborough system is like that. As a trustee, I found that out. As a parent, I didn't realize it because I lived within my nice, safe little cocoon within my nice little school and I was protected. But now I see that the needs of children have to be looked at and I don't know if we can have equitable representation from parents. With certain schools, especially in my own personal area, there are a lot of parents who stay home, but that's not the same across Scarborough, and that's where my concern lies.

Is it all right if Trustee McDonald -

Carol McDonald: Could I just add something to that, please?

The Vice-Chair: Yes, certainly.

Carol McDonald: I think one of the biggest concerns that we have — and we have worked very diligently on trying to establish parent councils all across Scarborough — is that you cannot mandate volunteerism, and to get the proper people, the proper demographic representation in our schools, is very difficult. So that is one thing.

The other thing is that a lot of the people we have seen in the representation of parent councils are people who truly want to be there but also they don't want an incredible amount of added responsibility with the hiring and firing of principals. They feel that they are not adequately trained to do that sort of thing. So you have to be very careful and move — you're moving very quickly on a lot of issues here, and I think one of the things that we have to be concerned with is implementing properly, whether it's 104 or whether it's parent councils.

Mrs McLeod: I should warn the members of the government party that as one of the co-authors and person solely responsible for the red book, while I don't carry it around as a Bible as some government members seem to do, every line of it is burned upon my brain and I'm ready to defend uncategorically and unapologetically exactly what it says.

First of all, about school councils, we have always supported increased parental involvement but would never support widespread school-based management to the point that would open up privatization and two-tiered education.

Yes, we would support amalgamation of school boards, as it very clearly says — the parts you don't quote — where it can be shown that school board amalgamations make sense, and in every study that has been done to date, at a local level, as has already been mentioned —

Interjections.

The Vice-Chair: You're out of order. Let her finish.

Mrs McLeod: The Essex county, the LondonMiddlesex and the Ottawa-Carleton studies, all done by

the previous government, all indicated that they were not recommending that those amalgamations proceed. At no time has anybody, to my knowledge, until this legislation was introduced, suggested the kind of amalgamations that are recommended here, and that includes the Sweeney task force on school board reduction. These are incredibly sweeping amalgamations.

Last, I will admit to trustees, because we've admitted it publicly, that we've endorsed the Royal Commission on Learning's recommendations on reducing numbers of trustees and capping salaries for trustees, but never would we see a system in which local trustees' roles were made so redundant and meaningless that eventually it will lead to the loss of local accountability entirely.

If there's time for a question, I would like to ask you what you think your role will be under this new amalgamated board.

Gaye Dale: I'm concerned that there isn't a role. What I want to do and what I want to see happen — as a parent, I feel valued, and I want to be valued as a trustee as well as a representative of the people. Perhaps you want to add something.

Carol McDonald: I do, I guess. For three years now, I think, we've given parts of our lives that I never thought we would have given. I have three young children in the school system as well and I value the school system that we have today.

I think what you will see for \$5,000 and for limited power are people who will be in with their special interests, and I don't think they will be the interests of the children.

I also suggest that, instead of board fighting, you will wind up with ward fighting, because people will go out and represent just their little pockets and communities versus the whole aspect of a Metro school board in the Metropolitan Toronto area.

Mr Wildman: I know my friend from St Catharines-Brock would not want to leave a wrong impression, so I would just point out that when he indicates that what the government is doing is what everybody wanted to do, it's not quite accurate. As I recall, Mr Sweeney, who was appointed by our government to look at amalgamation of the boards, recommended that there be four boards in Metropolitan Toronto, not one. If Mr Froese would like everyone to think that the government is simply doing what Mr Sweeney was recommending at the behest of our government, he's obviously mistaken. They aren't doing it. Nobody suggested that there would be one board, certainly not Mr Sweeney.

Mr Froese: I never said that.

The Vice-Chair: Come to order, please.

**Mr Wildman:** Do you think, as representatives of a board, that a reorganization of educational governance in Metro perhaps should be considered, and if so, would you support that while being concerned and perhaps opposed to one board for the whole region of Metropolitan Toronto?

Gaye Dale: I really think at this point, as a trustee, I'm concerned about what is locally in place. You'll see in your packages that Scarborough has a zero tolerance policy that's very valuable to us. As a parent, I was part of the development of that policy. I'm concerned, and I

have to say it and I've expressed it to the minister and to all of our local representatives, that we are concerned about the unique deeds within the region that we live in, within Scarborough, what our parents have come to expect from us. So what we are looking for as trustees is direction. What I'd like to say as a trustee is that I think we have to be mindful that we not do it too quickly as we make decisions, major decisions, that we not do it swiftly to the —

Mr Wildman: In British Columbia they took three

years rather than a few months.

The Vice-Chair: I'm afraid we are now out of time. I apologize.

**Mr Wildman:** Mr Chair, could I ask a question that I could get an answer from the government about?

The Vice-Chair: As has been the case, you can place

a question now to the government.

Mr Wildman: I would like to have someone, either Mr Skarica or some representative of the ministry, explain why the government decided to go for one board for Metro rather than four, as Mr Sweeney suggested, and who made this decision and what studies indicated that it would be an effective way of having educational governance in Metro.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you. Mrs McLeod, do you

want to place another question?

Mrs McLeod: Yes, if I can have another question. My memory fades at moments, but I well remember that although the consultation on the Sweeney report was aborted and the commission was not allowed to have any public hearings in any communities to discuss the proposed amalgamation, there was a sort of phone-in consultation. I think it might be at least relevant for the committee to have the report of the phone-in consultation on the proposed amalgamations under the Sweeney report. It was carried out by this government at some cost.

The Vice-Chair: Thank you. I'll ask the government to report back on that in writing at another time.

1800

#### LINDA GLOVER

The Vice-Chair: The next delegation is the Halton Board of Education, Linda Glover.

Ms Linda Glover: Thank you, Mr Chair and members of the standing committee. I will be brief. It's late, I know. I am pleased to be able to provide the following input to the standing committee in response to Bill 104. I want to stress that this input is personal. I have not sought formal approval from my board because of the very limited time provided to prepare this report.

I want to state at the outset that I support much of the intent of Bill 104, and I represent a board which is not directly affected by amalgamations. My recommendations

are as follows:

There must be a very clear definition of roles for the new boards, for individual trustees and for the director of education to clearly delineate what are and what are not "day-to-day operations." The present roles are very unclear, and this has led to significant problems in providing effective governance and administration for school systems.

Adequate time must be provided to move to the new district board configuration and the proposed new funding model. Expecting it to be completely implemented by January 1, 1998, is totally unrealistic.

The disqualification of teachers or their spouses from running for office as elected trustees should be rethought. There is existing conflict-of-interest legislation which applies, and I have to wonder why municipal employees and their spouses are not also being prevented from

running for municipal council positions.

It is essential that the new funding formula places public education on a level playing field with the Catholic school system. I fear that the public school system will become a dumping ground for hard-to-serve students. An example of the inequities is with respect to junior kindergarten. Our board, along with other large boards, had to cancel the program when the government made it optional. The government must make a decision to fund this program for all students or not fund it at all.

Last I would say, ask for our help and include us in planning for the implementation of the transition. Trustees and senior staff have a vested interest in ensuring that the legislation is implemented effectively because this will affect all students in Ontario and you have to

remember that.

I will answer any questions. Thank you.

Mrs McLeod: It's rather nice at the end of the day to have a chance for some discussion about the issues. I

appreciate your leaving some time for that.

I understand that Halton is not affected by the amalgamation in terms of the size of the jurisdiction, so I'm curious to know what part of the intent of Bill 104 you are supportive of.

Ms Glover: Basically I think it's needed. I've been in education for 12 years as a trustee. I've noticed changes. I feel that trustees have become very political. We get involved in a number of day-to-day activities. There isn't a clear understanding of what the role is. Everyone feels they're the boss, and you have to understand that it's the corporate body that makes the decisions, not individual trustees.

Mrs McLeod: Let me get a sense of how Bill 104 changes that. Obviously one of the things it does is to have many fewer trustees, and for some boards much larger jurisdictions. I understand that you're not commenting on that. There are a number of things you've spoken of in Bill 104 that you're concerned about in terms of the disqualification of teachers and spouses. I assume that's not one of the issues you want to have addressed, so the other outstanding piece would seem to be the taking over of educational funding, which is the sort of companion piece to Bill 104. Would you be supportive then of the government taking over educational funding?

Ms Glover: I'm supportive of the intent of Bill 104. To comment on it much further than I already have is difficult because we don't know what the funding model is. I think that's what is going to be important in this whole piece of legislation: how the funding model develops out of this.

Mrs McLeod: That's our concern, and I would think you would share that as a trustee: that we have no idea,

if the government takes over the funding, how dollars are going to be provided.

Your question about the definition of the role of the trustee is one which concerns you, and you've asked for some clarity, because it seems difficult to see what the role of the trustee is going to be in terms of decisionmaking or even collective bargaining, for that matter, if there is no control over the dollars at all, if all the decisions about funding are essentially being made on some formula out of Oueen's Park. Somebody said yesterday that there would be centralized decision-making and decentralized blame and that the role of the trustee was to take the blame. Is that how you see it?

Ms Glover: I can see that happening, that the trustee will be the complaints desk, and I think it would be the role of the trustee at that point to refer them to their MPP to solve the problems.

Mrs McLeod: I think if MPPs think family support is ringing our phones off the hook, wait until we get all the

education questions.

One of the issues that has been raised around the table - the Ernst and Young report indicates that costs under amalgamation could actually go up just in the process of amalgamation as you harmonize services and harmonize salaries - how do you see that kind of harmonization being carried out and the powers of the EIC to do that?

Ms Glover: Because we're not being amalgamated, it's difficult to answer that. We are a standalone board. I think, though, there would have to be some very clear guidelines as to what the purpose is and certainly where it's collective bargaining and how they're going to go about all those and looking at collective agreements etc and rolling those and combining those.

The Vice-Chair: Ms McLeod, I'm afraid your time is

Mrs McLeod: I just want to make a point of clarification as to how you separate the harmonization and the class formulas.

Interjection.

Mr Wildman: Thank you for your patience in waiting and making the presentation. I was struck by your comment about the concern over the time frame in which this is being done. In British Columbia, where they amalgamated boards, they took about three years to implement. This government is saying everything has to be in place by January 1, 1998.

I realize that Halton is not one of the boards that's being amalgamated, as you've indicated, but do you think it would be sensible, that it would make common sense to wait for the new funding formula prior to passing a restructuring bill so that everyone will know the whole package rather than just a piece of it now and a piece later?

1810

Ms Glover: I think it would be helpful to have the whole package. I believe the government wants to do it in bits and pieces so that we can't put it all together and we can't object to it and there isn't enough time to do so. I feel that January 1, 1998, is very close at hand. Even for a board that is not changing, moving from the Halton Board of Education to the district school board, you look

at all the policies, everything we have done for years and years, how are newly elected people going to be able to get a grasp on what is there, how they can convert it and move on and not affect the staff and the students they

Mr Wildman: I appreciate your comment. One of the things the minister has said is behind some of the changes he's proposing is his desire to strengthen the parent councils or the community councils, school councils. In the House in answer to some questions, he said he believed that school councils should become more involved in the operation of schools — and I think all of us would like to see parents involved in schools and in their kids' education — but that they might in fact be able to make decisions around curriculum, materials that are being used, books and so on. Would you see that as a benefit or a problem in terms of the implementation of Bill 104?

Ms Glover: I think you're going to have difficulty getting -

Interjection.

Mr Wildman: Is that in answer to my question?

Mrs Johns: It's not curriculum -

The Vice-Chair: Order, Mrs Johns, please.

Ms Glover: You are going to have difficulty getting people involved in a volunteer position, as the Scarborough board just said. People are willing to volunteer when their kids are in the school. They're not interested in what's happening with curriculum that much locally, and they're not interested in some of the other things that are going on in the schools.

Mr Wildman: But some particular groups might be.

Ms Glover: Some particular groups might be, and we have a particular group in Halton that we're dealing with currently that may be interested in changing the curriculum. But I think when you want consistency throughout a board, throughout Ontario, that has to come from the top; it has to come from the government, not from your local school community which wants a particular thing taught in the school.

Mr Wildman: Hear, hear. So, a particular group should not be able to determine what books might be

used in a particular school. Ms Glover: That's right.

Mr Carroll: I have a quick question, Ms Glover. I don't know anything there's more confusion over than the whole idea of junior kindergarten. You say in here: "Frankly, I fear that the public school system will become a dumping ground for hard-to-serve students. An example of the inequities is with respect to junior kindergarten. Our board, along with other large boards, had to cancel the program when the government made it optional. The government must make a decision to fund this program

for all students or not fund it at all.' Correct me if I'm wrong. I understand that junior kindergarten is funded for every school board in the province of Ontario exactly the same way that every other grade is funded. In the case of your board in Halton, why did that cause you to have to cancel the

program?

Ms Glover: Because we hadn't implemented it fully, and we could not afford to continue to implement it, because the grants we got for those students did not cover the cost of implementing the program.

Mr Carroll: But the fact that it's funded at the same level as grade 1, grade 2, grade 3 and grade 4, is that not

a fair way to fund junior kindergarten?

Ms Glover: It isn't a fair way when you don't give the grants to everyone. Our separate board has junior kindergarten. They ran a deficit for a couple of years to get junior kindergarten. We're not allowed to run a deficit; I'm sorry, but we're not allowed to.

**Mr Carroll:** But they get the same grants for junior kindergarten that they get for kindergarten and grade 1 and so does the Halton public board. I'm having trouble

understanding what is unfair about that.

Ms Glover: They get a higher grant.

Mr Wildman: They get a higher grant.
Ms Glover: They do get a higher grant.

Mr Carroll: But they get the same grant for each grade, as does the public board. I don't understand why

you say that's not fair.

Ms Glover: Because we had not implemented the program. The cost of implementing the program was significant, and those grants were being cut. We could not go to our taxpayer and ask taxpayers for the money to implement the program.

Mr Carroll: So it wasn't a per pupil grant.

**Ms Glover:** I think early education is important to everyone, and if the government takes over the funding, they should be funding the same for everyone.

Mr Carroll: Is the same true of kindergarten and

grade 1?

Ms Glover: Yes.

**Mr Carroll:** So you say those primary grades should all be funded at the same level regardless of what the tax base is for the school board.

Ms Glover: I'm saying that if you're funding the Catholic boards the same, you should be funding the public boards the same and you should be funding the

French-language boards the same.

Mr Skarica: Perhaps you could just help us on that same point where you say it is essential that the funding formula places public education on a level playing field with the Catholic school system. What are some of the things you would recommend that we do in the funding formula?

Ms Glover: I think you have to take into account the type of student the public board serves. The public boards get a variety of students with special needs, a number of ESL students, a number of students from different ethnic groups. We have to take everyone. We are obliged to take everyone. We cannot turn anyone away. I think that has to be recognized when you are funding school boards. You have to look at who the students are and fund accordingly.

The Chair: Ms Glover, thank you very much for appearing before us this evening. We appreciate your

intervention.

Mrs McLeod: I have a question for the ministry to respond to, please, Madam Chair, because I think we have to attempt to get some information that shows the very direct linkage between Bill 104 and the funding piece of the puzzle that is to come.

The Chair: All right.

Mrs McLeod: The ministry, through the establishment of the EIC, is going to be essentially directing the harmonization of salaries and services as the new boards are put in place as of January 1, 1998, according to the legislation. Quite clearly decisions that are made and directed by the EIC that lead to harmonization of salaries and services and therefore of costs are going to become in some way the basis for the funding formula which the minister is to develop at some point in time. I would like to ask the ministry how they are going to decide which of the various harmonized models that may exist in the province in terms of staffing ratios and salaries will become the basis for the funding formula allocations.

Mr Skarica: You've tabled a number of questions in the last few days. I've spoken with the ministry and what they're offering is a briefing session. So perhaps all the questions that you've tabled so far, plus any others, if you could provide them to me or the ministry in writing,

we'll set a date for a briefing session.

**Mrs McLeod:** I assume that will be a special meeting of the committee then; that we are going to recommend it be a public meeting?

Mr Skarica: We were going to suggest having a briefing session first. If you're dissatisfied, then we can

deal with the matter at that time.

Mrs McLeod: Given the number of presenters who have come to this committee, including the last presenter, and said, "We don't know how to deal with the legislation because we don't see all the pieces of the puzzle," it would be unconscionable not to have a public briefing.

Mr Skarica: What we're proposing is to brief you as best we can. If you're dissatisfied at that time, then you can bring it back here and make a motion or whatever.

Mrs McLeod: I'll accept written answers to all the

questions that I've tabled then.

Mr Wildman: On this matter, I agree with my colleague from Fort William that it should be a session before the committee, but I'll take Mr Skarica up on his offer and we'll see. But I think it really should be a public session so that not just the members of the committee can benefit but the public can also see and hear what the ministry staff are able to present.

Just on that matter, for the sanity of Toni and myself and everyone else, could we have a list of the questions that have been asked so that we know all the things that

have been asked?

The Chair: That will be provided? Mr Ted Glenn: Yes, I have that. 1820

The Chair: Terrific. We'll provide that to the committee then

There is one final item for the committee before we adjourn. There's a deferred motion from Mrs McLeod. Mr Skarica was going to speak to it.

Mr Skarica: I basically already did. That's what I've

The Chair: That's your response to the motion as well? Well, we'll have to determine whether we vote on it at this stage.

Interjection.

The Chair: Terrific. Do you want to present it, Mrs McLeod? Perhaps we can just read it.

Mrs McLeod: I move that this committee recommend to the government House leader that the order with respect to Bill 104 be amended so that the committee can sit on March 3 or March 4 at its regular meeting time to ask technical questions of the staff of the Ministry of Education and Training pertaining to Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, 1997.

The Chair: Any further debate on this motion?

Mrs McLeod: Yes, please, Madam Chair. It really is beyond my understanding that a government that is prepared to bring in such sweeping changes, that appears to think its directions are founded on something which is defensible, is unwilling to allow even this minimal opportunity for some response in a public session where others who have raised these concerns can hear the responses to the kinds of questions that have been raised, not just by members of the opposition. The questions we have raised are reflections of the questions that have been asked by every presenter to this committee. I just do not understand why the government feels the need both for such speed and for such secrecy that it doesn't allow that kind of discussion.

Mr Preston: Is this above and beyond what you've offered to do, or what?

Mr Skarica: Yes, it is. What I'm offering is that we have a briefing with the ministry and the opposition. If

they're dissatisfied, they can bring a motion at that time.

Mr Preston: I find it very strange that the opposition has 10 minutes to ask questions in the House and you didn't ask any of these questions of the minister.

Mrs McLeod: I would be delighted to have an opportunity in the House to ask —

Interjection.

The Chair: You're out of order.

Mr Preston: Oh, I'm sorry.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair, at some point the member opposite might be interested in seeing the kinds of questions that are being raised, or in even looking at trying to respond to some of the questions that have been raised by the presenters. If we cannot have some public presentation and response from the ministry — there's been no opportunity in these committee hearings to question the minister or the ministry directly about the bill — I will accept the written responses. I fully intend to make those public. I would be quite happy to have a briefing following the written responses.

The Chair: We have a motion on the floor at the

Mr Wildman: I wasn't going to intervene in this debate because of the hour, but Mr Preston provoked me.

The Chair: Say it's not so. We could be here a long time.

Mr Wildman: Members of the opposition have repeatedly raised questions in the Legislature, during question period and during other debates, about the changes in

funding for education. The problem is that we haven't been able to get the answers. It's not that we haven't raised the questions. I'm not blaming Mr Skarica for this. The fact is that the way this committee's time has been allocated by the House doesn't really allow for the ministry to make a presentation during these sessions because the sessions are set up for hearing the public, as we wish to do.

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): Point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: I'd like you to stick to the motion.

Mr Wildman: I would prefer to have an opportunity for the parliamentary assistant, the minister or a senior member of the bureaucracy to appear before the committee and make a presentation. If the committee decides in its wisdom to say no to that, then I would hope that as a second choice Mr Skarica's offer stands. The reason I say it's a second choice is because while that will give members of the committee the opportunity to ask questions and hear what the ministry has to say, it doesn't make it possible for the public — parents, trustees, teachers and everyone else — to hear what the ministry is proposing.

Mr Jordan: The parliamentary assistant has already offered the briefing to the leader of the official opposition. She has accepted that, and if she's not satisfied with that, she said she will take it to the next step. I would suggest that the subject is finished and we should adjourn and get on

and get on.

The Chair: The difficulty with that, Mr Jordan, is that we have a motion on the floor that we have to deal with, and the motion calls for us to ask questions of the ministry at our meetings in March. Unless there's further debate, I can put that to a vote and then we can deal with it.

Mrs McLeod: There is a further point, because I also want to respond to the fact that we had 10 minutes at the outset of the presentation. I should also clarify the record. I am the education critic for the official opposition and it's as such that I bring my concerns to this particular committee.

I also bring the concerns of somebody who's been involved in education for well over 20 years. I don't feel that 10 minutes is enough time to ask the kinds of questions about legislation which I personally believe is the beginning of the destruction of the education system I believe in and that a lot of people in this province believe in.

The Chair: Any further debate? All right, then I'll put the motion to a vote. All in favour? Against? The motion is defeated.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are adjourned until next Monday.

The committee adjourned at 1826.



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#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain PC)

\*Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand PC)

\*Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex PC)

\*Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma ND)

\*In attendance / présents

Substitutions present / Membres remplaçants présents:

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North / -Nord PC) for Mrs Munro

Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South / -Sud ND)

Clerk / Greffière: Ms Tonia Grannum

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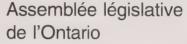
First Session, 36th Parliament

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Monday 24 February 1997

Standing committee on social development

Fewer School Boards Act, 1997



Première session, 36e législature

### Journal des débats (Hansard)

Lundi 24 février 1997

Comité permanent des affaires sociales

Loi de 1997 réduisant le nombre de conseils scolaires



Chair: Annamarie Castrilli Clerk: Tonia Grannum Présidente : Annamarie Castrilli Greffière : Tonia Grannum

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#### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Monday 24 February 1997

#### ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

#### COMITÉ PERMANENT DES AFFAIRES SOCIALES

Lundi 24 février 1997

The committee met at 0900 in committee room 1.

#### FEWER SCHOOL BOARDS ACT, 1997 LOI DE 1997 RÉDUISANT LE NOMBRE DE CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Consideration of Bill 104, An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system. providing for certain matters related to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 104, Loi visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte, l'efficacité et la qualité du système scolaire ontarien en permettant la réduction du nombre des conseils scolaires, en créant la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation. chargée d'encadrer la transition vers le nouveau système. en prévoyant certaines questions liées aux élections de 1997 et en apportant d'autres améliorations à la Loi sur l'éducation et à la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.

#### ROSEMARY BAYCROFT

The Chair (Ms Annamarie Castrilli): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. We're going to try to start as promptly as possible this morning. Could I ask Rosemary Baycroft to come forward? Thanks very much for being here bright and early this morning. We have 10 minutes for your presentation, and if there's any time left over, the committee will ask you questions.

Ms Rosemary Baycroft: Do I just barge ahead or do I wait till people sit?

The Chair: Absolutely, just barge ahead.

Ms Baycroft: I'm speaking to you today, those of you who have shown up, as a parent with two children in the Toronto school board system for the past 15 years.

I'd like to speak in favour of the excellence of our education system and, in particular, the teaching staff who for so many years, in spite of overcrowded conditions and children with very differing needs, have managed to build self-esteem and learning skills in students from all walks of life.

I also speak to you as an education worker myself. We're the people who your government has referred to as the "bloated education bureaucracy." I'd like to talk to you about what it is we do. Members of my union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, or CUPE, as it's called, perform services which your government proposes to outsource. CUPE members are the administrative

assistant in the school office, bandaging knees, listening to parents' concerns, while running an office with their other hand.

We're the caretakers, cleaners and matrons who keep the school clean and safe, find a lost ball, set up furniture and equipment and displays and still have time to talk to the children. We're the first person the children see when they come into the school to help them find their way to the office. We're also the engineers and the chief caretakers who keep the schools heated and maintain standards of comfort and safety. We do repairs and call in maintenance requests for qualified tradespeople, the electricians, carpenters and plumbers who fix the problems in the schools.

We are the people who purchase the goods, pay the bills, keep the records, process the payrolls, prepare budgets, talk to concerned parents, prepare social work reports, maintain student records, dispense TTC tickets, bursaries and busing information, advise on choice of school, deal with complaints, and arrange meetings, agendas, conferences and workshops. We are the people who prepare curriculum materials, conduct research, select and catalogue books for the school libraries. We provide research materials, printing services, binding, ordering of supplies and equipment. We are the draftspeople who draft the plans for renovations and repairs. We deal with emergencies and emergency repairs and maintain records of these. We provide health and safety materials to our staff and to the students, and we recommend the use of safe chemicals for cleaning in the schools.

We are also the instructors of the ESL continuing education classes. We register participants, provide guidance information, pick up and deliver furniture, equipment and hot lunches. We are the cooks who prepare the nutritious food. We purchase and service computers, install programs, train staff and students and serve as troubleshooters when there are problems.

We're also the school community advisers, helping parents access their school system, providing translations and helping organize meetings. We're in the classrooms as adult instructors in literacy, ESL, heritage languages and seniors' programs. We are also the education assistants helping teachers and students cope with expanding class size and the integration of children with very special needs.

Why would a government want to outsource such excellent services? How will outsourcing benefit the children in the classroom? Will strangers in the school halls doing repairs improve the classroom? Will principals and teachers becoming chief executive officers of a

new school enterprise give them more time to spend with our students in the classrooms?

Will class text reading donated by Texaco improve the quality of education? Will plastic food lunches brought to you by Kraft Foods or Pepsi improve concentration in the classroom? How will eliminating education assistants improve quality of instruction for a learning-disabled or gifted student? Why should we be paying user fees for our continuing education programs which we already fund through direct taxation?

You, as the elected representatives of the taxpayers, have to consider whether private business enterprises whose main drive is for profit should control what our students learn, more specifically, American or other

foreign businesses. What is in it for us?

Are there under-the-table profits to be made by government officials? Or will the bidders on curriculum modules give jobs to your children or our children or scholarships at American universities? We don't understand what the intent is. Or will our kids have to stay here in Canada, like the young people today, and work for part-time, dead-end jobs for \$7 to \$10 an hour? We ask you to be careful. If you vote to destroy the education system we have created, your children may pay dearly for it too.

The fabricated crisis in education created by this government and the press has another agenda. The headline in the Sunday Star this weekend said, "Why Our Kids Are at the Bottom of the Class in Science." It quotes a national test conducted by the Council of Ministers of Education, whatever that is, and it says that our children had problems on a science test. This is the

headline in the Sunday Star.

However, on February 20 in the Toronto Star business pages, I got an idea of what all this was about. "Torstar Corp, publisher of the Star, said its children's supplementary education division will buy the science core curriculum" kit "from a subsidiary of Encyclopedia Britannica." These are modular-based science kits for all students from kindergarten to grade 6. "The modules were developed at the University of California.... Terms of the deal were not disclosed."

That's the real agenda here. The real problem we see is that this government is proposing to bring American and foreign business into the education business. We believe this is the wrong direction completely for the

government to go in.

I have a proposal to alleviate the problem, one of the problems being the lack of democracy in this legislation. Bill 104 proposes taxation without local representation. I have a proposal to eliminate a truly bloated government bureaucracy, to abolish the provincial government and give the 50% tax — as you're all aware, over the last 20 years our provincial taxation rate has gone from 10% to 50%, with very little substantial improvement in the benefits from this. My proposal would be that the 50% income tax go directly down to the megacities and the municipal boards you are proposing to create. That would give us vast sums of money with which to educate the children of this province.

That way we can save on bloated MPP salaries and perks; we can cut out the \$60,000-a-year, for-life pen-

sions, which is like double the salary of any of our workers. Perhaps we could cut out the limos and the heavy administration costs and get rid of the duplication of service such as education, roads, highways, transit, health, hospitals, homes for the aged, garbage and so on that have now been proposed to be passed down to the municipal level of government. Therefore, you could give the money to where the responsibility lies, which would be true taxation with representation.

I'm sure the municipal governments and local school boards, who already know how to effectively administer and provide these services, would benefit greatly from

having direct funds.

We could also sell off or lease provincial government buildings. We could eliminate the ivory tower turrets with the goons dressed in riot gear and replace them with open, public school board buildings and city halls where citizens are greeted warmly by their local representatives and can get straight answers to their many questions.

We could remodel the provincial buildings into megaschools without any interference from business interests or the profit motive and keep profit out of our public

services.

I ask the committee to consider the benefit of a truly democratic model of providing the people of Ontario with revitalized education and municipal services in the most democratic and cost-effective manner.

0910

I urge you to shelve Bill 104 and Bill 103, which turn everything on its head like a scene from Alice in Wonderland. Put our tax dollars back where they belong. Eliminate the real bloated bureaucracies and let us provide direct quality services by quality workers.

The Chair: We have one minute for questioning. We ended last time with the official opposition, so Mr

Wildman, do you have a very quick question?

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I found your presentation thought-provoking. Obviously, some of it is tongue-in-cheek in terms of the elimination of the provincial government. What do you think the real purpose of Bill 104 is? The government basically says, "Everybody is in favour of downsizing and amalgamating boards, so what's the fuss?" Why are you concerned? What do you think the real purpose of this bill is?

Ms Baycroft: Î think the real purpose of the bill is a tax grab of provincial property tax, and our government already has tax levying power and doesn't need it. It also would eliminate direct representation at the school board and municipal level for the tax dollars raised at that level.

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): Thank you for your presentation. You talked at great length about us bringing American and foreign business in to control what our children learn. Could you tell me which section of Bill 104 causes you to think that way?

Ms Baycroft: There's one line that talks about outsourcing of public services, and to me, outsourcing is exactly what I quoted from the Toronto Star business pages. This is obviously the direction: to buy modules of education from private enterprise and allow them to put

them in our schools.

We already have indications that some corporations and banks have submitted little tags and said they will produce textbooks for us if we put the tag in that it's provided by them. I'm absolutely appalled, as a parent, at that kind of education. What are we paying tax dollars for if not to educate our children? Not to go into profitmaking enterprises: They've got other markets; they can keep selling their cereal. I don't want them involved in the education of my children.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I appreciated you finding the article in the Toronto Star about the purchasing of American curriculum materials. You expressed concern that this might be the direction we're going in the future. I'm wondering whether or not there's going to

be any choice.

You may know that when the government looked at the cost savings from amalgamation, one of the areas in which they were going to find some cost savings, presumably, was to reduce the curriculum support provided at the local board level by the educational support people. We know the Ministry of Education and Training has very few people left within the ministry ranks who are able to do the curriculum development, so do you think there's going to be any choice other than to bring in prepackaged curriculum materials?

Ms Baycroft: Absolutely. We have excellent curriculum staff now at the cheapest possible price. There's no one working at the Toronto Board of Education, including the director, who earns more than \$120,000 a year; compare that with the salaries of MPPs or of corporate business magnates who are making millions. Do you really think we're not going to be paying their salaries through our taxes if they are allowed to create a curricular.

lum?

We have excellent people who are teachers, out of the classrooms, who know how to handle curriculum, how to deliver curriculum. They should be kept intact, in my view.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Baycroft, for coming here this morning and making your presentation.

**Mr Wildman:** Just for the record, an MPP makes \$78,000.

Ms Baycroft: Yes, but you've got a lot of other perks.

#### COLLEEN MORRIS

The Chair: I ask Colleen Morris to come forward. Ms Morris, you have 10 minutes.

Ms Colleen Morris: Last week I spoke without preparation as a member of a parent-staff association. Today I am prepared to speak as an individual about Bill 104.

I would like to show a five-minute video produced by ABC News in 1990 of a great school system. It shows a school system that asked for more than the basics and got more than the basics. It shows dedicated teachers and school children who are putting forth such efforts to become educated, caring, thoughtful and responsible people.

Video presentation.

0920

Ms Morris: As you saw, the great school system ABC News highlighted is here in Ontario. We all have a responsibility to keep nurturing this public treasure. As

adults, we have a big responsibility to provide for our children in many ways, including their education.

As members of the provincial Legislature you have an even bigger responsibility, and as members of this committee you have the responsibility to decide if Bill 104 will help improve learning for every child in Ontario.

If you're unsure, don't ask tax reduction experts; ask educators such as Gerald Caplan, who co-chaired the Royal Commission on Learning, or David Moll, who is chair of the Toronto Board of Education.

We need to invest in education, not take money out of it. We need to put back the \$400 million that was

stripped out of the system this year.

You people can't give a child who went without junior kindergarten that chance again, but you can ensure that four-year-olds in September can attend school. You can't give back the chance to learn in a school library or to learn music or science that a child lost this year, but you can ensure that all Ontario children will have those opportunities in September. You can't improve overcrowded classrooms this year, but you can reduce class sizes by September. Support Bill 110, a private member's bill on this very issue.

As you heard in the ABC News clip, the Americans want to copy our system of education. It's interesting that this year Bill Clinton has decided to put billions of

dollars into American schools.

We need to build wisely on our education system, which was begun with a lot of sacrifice in 1841. Quite simply, Bill 104 will destroy what has been built.

I say today to you, go down in history by making the right choice for Ontario's children. Ask our government to withdraw Bill 104. Ask our government to make a thorough plan first of how the cost of each child's education is to be met, taking into account individual, community and regional needs. Finally, ask for proof from the Minister of Education and Training that changing the funding and the governance of education, which is essentially what Bill 104 is, will improve each child's learning in Ontario.

The future of this province depends on your good judgement and your courage in acting wisely on behalf of

our 2,070,000 school children. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Morris. Unfortunately, you've used up all your time. Your visual presentation was much appreciated as well.

#### CHERYL STEWART

The Chair: I ask Cheryl Stewart to come forward. Welcome, Ms Stewart. Thank you for being here this morning. You have 10 minutes in which to make your presentation.

Ms Cheryl Stewart: Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. I would like to clarify at the beginning that I am not a member of a union or a special interest group. I'm here as a parent whose only vested interest in this issue is the quality of education that my children receive in the public education system and the enormous educational property tax burden I've had to bear.

I would like to state that I was disappointed that the Minister of Education and Training has not directed the complete elimination of school boards. I have long been resentful and angry that exorbitant tax increases have been levied on property owners by school boards, yet teachers often have to ask students to share textbooks and, in some cases, to forgo the purchase of textbooks such as spellers because the budget wouldn't allow it. Where have our priorities been?

However, getting to Bill 104, there are a number of issues and recommendations I would like to bring

forward for your consideration.

(1) School boards have harboured far too many highly paid bureaucrats who have had very little impact on the actual quality of teaching in the classrooms. With the plan to amalgamate school boards into 66 new school districts must come massive reductions in the size of board bureaucracies. We cannot assume that by reducing the number of school boards, the bureaucracies will be reduced accordingly. This is where the uncontrolled educational spending has occurred in the past.

The Ministry of Education must formulate strict regulations as to the number of non-classroom teaching staff that can be employed by any board. This number could be arrived at by looking at the number of students

by grade served by each board.

In conjunction with this, regulations must be formulated that limit the amount of non-classroom spending by any board. Expenditures should be clearly assigned by the ministry as being classroom or non-classroom and a maximum amount of allowable non-classroom expenditures should be legislated. Classroom and custodial funding must be safeguarded. There should no longer be room for creative accounting practices to occur by school boards.

(2) It is absolutely critical that the new curriculum guidelines to be released by the ministry be concise, clear, specific and skill-based. Curriculum outlines should be able to be taken directly from the ministry to the classroom to be implemented easily. The common curriculum has been a wonderful make-work project. Its vague wording and educational jargon have had bureaucrats in boards across the province forming committees to interpret it.

For example, in one board it took the work of a committee of 21 top-level administrators, over a period of two years, to interpret the Common Curriculum into a learning outcomes document for teachers. This document was just 40 pages of more educational jargon and still did not specify what kids will learn, how they will learn it and when they will learn it. My point is that this has been an inexcusable waste of taxpayers' money that could have been directed to the classrooms.

You will not find me asking for increased educational funding. In fact, I feel there is room to reduce overall educational funding without affecting the quality of the teaching going on in the classrooms nor reducing class-

room funding.

(3) I would like to request that the use of explicit phonics instruction be included in the language arts curricula for the primary grades. Teachers who do use phonics often use phoney phonics that only includes incidental word-sound relationships and rhyming families. Adequate teacher training in the use of explicit phonics

is necessary both in the faculties of education and at professional development workshops. Phonics-based reading programs need to be included on Circular 14. Presently there are none.

All children, with the exception of the lucky ones who seem to be born readers, will benefit tremendously from the inclusion of explicit phonics instruction in their reading programs, and the need for remedial programs will be reduced significantly, as will the cost they incur. Children's grasp of phonics should not be left to chance. The committee might be interested to know that California has recently adopted the ABC law, which legislated the use of explicit phonics and spelling in their schools.

(4) Parent advisory councils. I have great concerns about these councils. If they are going to exist, they must have absolutely clear mandates and they must have true power, ie, the hiring and firing of principals and input into teacher hiring, operating budgets and programs. There must be safeguards in place that give weight to these councils, otherwise they can be easily sidetracked into various projects that really have very little consequence on the educational outcomes of the students. And of course there is the possibility of council members and/or their children incurring the wrath of staff who may not agree with issues being advocated.

(5) I agree with the reduction in the number of school trustees. However, one must realize that the cost incurred by the existence of trustees has not been a significant factor in the skyrocketing cost of education in Ontario. There are many well-intentioned and capable trustees, but it has also been my observation that in some cases trustees go through a metamorphosis of sorts after election and begin to protect the interests and agendas of the board administrators and forget who they were elected to represent and advocate for: parents and taxpayers.

If trustees are effective and truly represent the interests of their constituents, they are a worthwhile investment. However, their jobs must be clearly defined and they must be accountable to the electorate. A final comment here: I feel it is an experiment to see if honest, capable trustees can be attracted to work for a \$5,000-a-year

honorarium. That test is yet to come.

(6) I applaud the government's commitment to implement testing of grade 3 students across the province. The results of these tests must reflect the progress of student achievement in relation to the provincial curriculum. My fear is that teachers will be asked to teach to the test packages provided and that test results will reflect the teaching of that test package material and not the skill and knowledge gained, or not gained, from the provincial curriculum.

I would like to conclude by saying that true reform of the public education system will never be completely effective until parents are given true choice in how and where their children are educated. I would like to leave open the suggestion for education vouchers or charter schools in Ontario. While the educational establishment would never advocate for such changes, I firmly believe that an element of competition for educational dollars would bring swift and positive changes to the quality of education our children receive in Ontario.

I realize that some of the issues I've raised today might go beyond the scope of Bill 104 and the work of

this committee. However, it is rare that parents have an opportunity to publicly express their concerns about their children's education, and I appreciate the opportunity to be here today.

0930

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Stewart. We

have about a minute per caucus.

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): I'd like to thank you for your presentation today. I appreciate the fact that you gave us a number of constructive comments about implementation.

There were a number of things I was interested in. I wanted to ask you a little about the ABC law that was being generated in California. I also wanted to talk to you about teachers teaching to testing. Both of those issues have come to me as I've talked to my boards in the last few weeks, and I'm interested. Could you just expand on

those for a minute for me, please?

Ms Stewart: First, in terms of the ABC law in California, I don't think it's any secret that California reading and writing test results have been absolutely horrible for the last few years. As California has struggled with how to fix that particular problem — and of course you have to realize, that whole language was basically started in California and moved eastward. I think administrators and legislators have come to the realization that explicit phonics instruction is the only true, scientifically proven method of ensuring that children learn to read. I have to applaud the government down there for having the courage, because there certainly was a huge backlash by bureaucrats down there. There's no question that it was very difficult to do that. The legislators have to be applauded for that.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much. I appreciate that at the beginning you indicated that your sole concern in being here today relates to the quality of education your children would receive. That's the area I'd like to ask you a bit about as a concerned parent, because a number of us are having difficulty seeing how Bill 104 is actually going to improve the quality of education, particularly when it comes to freeing dollars up for the classroom, which is one of the stated intents. You've mentioned that cutting down the number of trustees is not big dollars, and that's certainly true. Cutting down the number of administrators is not huge dollars either, because the total cost of administration is less than 5% of educational

spending.

Ms Stewart: I would have to disagree with you there. Mrs McLeod: This is based on ministry figures. I wanted to tell you what the ministry figures are and then ask if it would concern you. When the Ministry of Education then sat down to come up with its cost savings through the amalgamation in Bill 104, it was able to come up with \$150 million of its \$14-billion budget. One of the areas in which they had to find dollars to make up even \$150 million in savings was \$9.9 million for classroom supplies and equipment. Does it concern you that even to find \$150 million in savings through this amalgamation, they would have to take more dollars out of direct classroom supplies and equipment?

Ms Stewart: It certainly does. That's why I state in my presentation that classroom spending has to be

safeguarded. I would certainly challenge the information you have in terms of the amount of money spent on administration and boards.

Mrs McLeod: These are ministry figures, ma'am.

Ms Stewart: I would suspect, then, that there is some creative accounting going on and that there are certain items included in administration or not included in administrative costs that should or shouldn't be. I've seen that myself in my own board in presentations, where the chair of our board told the public in a meeting that 1% of their expenditures are spent on administration. Anybody knows that can't be true.

Mr Wildman: It's actually about 5% across most boards, not 1% — that would be a ridiculous figure —

but 5% isn't very much.

I note that you said classroom and custodial funding must be safeguarded. My colleague has pointed out that one of the savings identified by the ministry that would accrue from Bill 104 is cuts to supplies and classrooms. Are you aware that the Minister of Education and Training does not count custodial care as classroom expenditure and believes it could be cut, and actually the bill provides for outsourcing of such services?

Ms Stewart: I'm not aware of that, but I am concerned that custodial costs would not be safeguarded as well. That's why I included that in my presentation.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Stewart, for coming all the way from Bolton in rush-hour traffic. It must have been tough.

#### AINE SUTTLE

The Chair: I ask Aine Suttle to come forward, please. Welcome. You have 10 minutes for your presentation.

Ms Aine Suttle: Thanks for the opportunity to speak on this subject. The background I bring to it is that I'm a parent of an 11-year-old son and I work as a part-time assistant to a trustee at the Toronto Board of Education, although I'm not representing the board and the research I did to put this paper together was done completely on my own time.

I give you this information with some trepidation, as I have some fears that you will completely dismiss my opinion knowing that I work for a school board. But let me tell you that I've worked at many different jobs over my 50 years, and only the last two have been spent in a school board setting. My 11 years as a parent have been far more influential.

I could talk for a long time on various aspects of this bill, but I'll stick to the representation issue because it's something I've become familiar with in the last two years.

Having worked for a trustee, I know what a good trustee does. They're elected to represent the people in their ward. Practically speaking, that ends up mostly being students and parents from the ward schools. The Toronto board is very large and therefore complex. It's very difficult for a parent to know which school is best for their child. It's not just a matter of what programs are offered but also what the culture or atmosphere of the school is like.

For example, a mother called lately whose son was extremely unhappy in his elementary school. He was shy,

a new immigrant and was having considerable difficulty making friends. He was being picked on by some of the other children, making his life quite miserable. My trustee knew that another school close by, where a large percentage of the children were new immigrants and the principal was from a visible minority, would probably be a lot more suitable. She recommended the school, and within weeks the child was very happy and learning rapidly. It was not that there was anything wrong, necessarily, with the other school; it just didn't suit this particular child.

Trustees develop policies for the board. That involves considerable consultation with all the stakeholders. For example, the Toronto board recently adopted a new policy on anaphylactic shock and how to deal with students suffering from that condition. It took a lot of time working with both parents of children with the condition and staff who would have to deal with the situation. Ultimately, a practical, workable policy was developed which was acceptable to all parties involved. This couldn't have been done by somebody who was working half a day a week, which is basically what the trustees are being cut back to.

Trustees help their school communities. Each ward community has different needs and each part of a ward is different. The northern part of our ward is quite affluent, with parents who are very involved with their children's schooling. The southern part is quite poor, designated inner-city and where the parents have more difficulty getting involved with their children's schooling. The trustee has been very involved in developing a ward council which helps to deal equitably with all the different communities in the ward and the needs. We also have two schools for adults in our area, again a very different community with very different needs.

I have heard the argument that all the work trustees do could be done by other staff in the school board. That may be true, but I think you'll find that those other staff come at a higher price. Trustees are very good value for the money they are paid, so why do you want to get rid of them or at least cut them so much that they'll be unable to fulfil the role they play? I haven't had a decent

answer from anybody on this one yet.

When I looked at Bill 104, I really began to wonder if it was designed by somebody who had a grudge against the school system. It would appear as if it's designed to eliminate school boards entirely. The fact that the trustees have been reduced to a level where they will be unable to represent adequately the people who elect them makes me think that you are leaving the position in place so that the electors will do the dirty job. They'll become so dissatisfied with the trustees that they will throw them out in the future.

Although the salary issue of \$5,000 a year is not part of the actual bill, I fear you're unlikely to hold hearings on every aspect of the announcement made by John Snobelen on January 13, so I'll deal with it now. At the Toronto board, the trustees are paid \$49,683 per year. This, when compared with the rest of Ontario, seems quite high, so I started what turned out to be a long job of sorting out how much trustees are paid across the province and what numbers of students they're dealing with.

I started with the Ontario School Board Reduction Task Force final report, commonly known as the Sweeney commission; no indication there how much they were paid. I went to the government bookstore on Bay Street, and there was no information there. I was shocked when I was there to see how little current information was available on just about anything. It seems as if hardly any reports have been written since 1994. All the annual reports seem to have disappeared. It's very strange. Fortunately, there are still some actual people working at the bookstore and one very helpful man told me that the school governance restructuring branch was just next door in the Mowat building. At last, information was available. Here I learned that trustees in most boards are paid under \$10,000 a year.

0940

Then I started wondering how many schools and students each board was dealing with, and that was very revealing. When I looked at Nipissing, for instance, in northern Ontario, I discovered the following: It's a board with just over 10,000 students, 27 schools and 17 trustees. When I compared that with Toronto, with over 72,000 students, 149 schools and 18 trustees, things sort of dropped into place. In Nipissing you're talking about a trustee-student ratio of one to 610; in Toronto that's one to 4.008. The ratio of trustees to students is 6.5 times greater in Toronto when compared with Nipissing, but the salary of the Toronto trustees is not 6.5 times. In fact, when you worked out the cost of the trustees in the two boards, based on the number of students, the Nipissing trustees cost more per student than the Toronto trustees not much more, but it was quite interesting.

I won't try to present the situation for the north because I don't live there, but it did occur to me that it maybe makes sense in northern Ontario to have a larger number of trustees to cover the large geographic areas up there, but seeing as there are 17 trustees for only 27 schools, they probably don't need to work full time. I emphasize that this is only a supposition on my part based on trying to understand the difference with our board. In Toronto, each trustee is dealing with over 4,000 students in an average of 8.2 schools, so the time

demands are much greater.

Then I looked at the future situation and compared the two areas. Nipissing would be amalgamated with east and west Parry Sound to make school board number four with over 16,000 students, 51 schools, and then we have this trustee number of five to 12. Basically, we're in a situation where for 65 of the 66 school boards, we don't know how many trustees they're going to have, and that is crazy. You can't pass legislation where you don't have very basic information. In that area, the trustee ratio could be as high as one trustee for 3,373 students. If that's the case, it's getting close to the Toronto level and I can't see trustees up there being able to deal with that number of students on a part-time basis with the huge geographic areas that they're trying to cover. In the same way, in Metro, one trustee with 13,000 students equally can't manage at half a day a week, which is what it's going to be.

The Chair: Could I ask you to wrap up? You're over

your time limit.

Ms Suttle: Okay. The cost savings are not going to be worth the lack of representation. We're just losing control of our school boards.

I added up the total of students in northern Ontario and they totalled almost a third of the number of students in the new Metro board.

I've recorded the trustee representation and the students etc across Ontario, which you'll find attached. You should also notice that the new French boards are mostly going to be created from the northern boards, which currently have a larger proportion of French students, and that will make the northern boards even smaller. There's hardly any information on these French boards. We've no idea how many students there are going to be or if they're going to have their own schools. None of that seems to be available. You need to know that information.

This is my last point. There was one piece in the Sweeney report that I found really interesting. It was appendix C, titled "Summary of Public Responses." Apparently, the Sweeney commission received 19,031 responses, 87% of which were opposed to the recommendations; 7% were supportive and 6% were unknown. That is pretty devastating, and when I look at the Sweeney recommendations, they are not nearly as drastic in terms of cuts as Bill 104, so I can guarantee you that no matter who you hear here, there are more people who are opposed to this than not, many more.

You're barraging us with legislative changes and it's a dreadful mistake. Bill 104 is so totally unacceptable that I urge you to just throw it in the garbage and start over. But start with consultation. Look for facts, not impressions. Bill 104 is sadly lacking in solid facts. I've tried to fill in some of the gaps in information but it's a puny attempt because I'm not employed by you to do so and I could only do what I could in my spare time.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Suttle, and thank you for the thoughtfulness you've put into this presentation.

#### KATHRYN BLACKETT

The Chair: Could I ask Kathryn Blackett to come forward. Thank you for being here, Ms Blackett. Welcome to the committee. You have 10 minutes within which to make your presentation.

Ms Kathryn Blackett: My name is Kathryn Blackett, obviously. I am a homeowner in the city of Toronto, where I have lived all my life. I am also the mother of three children who are all in the public school system. I have never been involved in such an official political exercise as this and I feel compelled to explain what has propelled me into this room. It is the threat of this government's attack on public education in Ontario.

I have strong misgivings about this process even as I begin. As a member of a parent group, I am aware that across the city, home-and-school associations and PTAs have continually requested the attention of the Minister of Education both to express their concerns about his policy and to hear his answers to their questions. But the minister has not deigned to appear at one of these schools. As far as I know, he has not answered a single letter. He is clearly uninterested in the views or anxieties

of Ontario parents and I have no faith that he will hear mine.

When I looked at the list of group speakers which the Conservative Party had nominated, this feeling was amplified. Absent from the list were groups concerned with substantive issues in education. Present on the list were ratepayer groups, the cottage owners' association, the C.D. Howe Institute, the Fraser Institute — groups whose fundamental focus is the tax dollar. But Bill 104 is not supposed to be about education funding or tax dollars. Where is the evidence that the Conservative Party is giving serious thought to the educational ramifications of their legislation? Nowhere.

I also know that 1,157 requests to speak before this committee were received by the clerk, the vast majority of those being from concerned individuals — I suppose the ultimate special interest group, parents. That less than 6% of those people are being granted the opportunity to speak by virtue of knowing the right people is nothing less than a travesty and an abrogation of democratic rights. I hope that committee members do not underestimate the intensity of feeling that these people must have to be willing to come to the Legislature and stand before your committee to declare their concerns about this bill.

Despite my misgivings about this process, I will none the less address what I see as fundamentally wrong in Bill 104.

In regard to the amalgamation of school boards, the Conservatives may have convinced many that this is a great exercise in efficiency and cost saving. Many of us, though, are acutely aware that the increased efficiency and savings are minimal, while the loss to democratic representation is immense. We understand that in Metro, with 22 part-time school trustees responsible for more than 500 schools and 310,000 students, our access to our elected representatives will be virtually nil. It is also not difficult to imagine the calibre of trustee we will attract for \$5,000 a year.

We are not deceived. We understand that this bill's mandate is to weaken school boards so that further attacks on the education system and on its employees will be made unopposed. It is also clear to us that the imposition of parent councils is in no way a replacement for lost school trustees. It may give some the illusion of power at the school level, but I believe these councils are a devastatingly bad idea. They have not worked in Great Britain and they have not worked in New Zealand. Few parents have the time or the inclination necessary for such a demanding responsibility, and these councils have only intensified the disparities between schools in poorer and wealthier neighbourhoods. Our school boards now function to ensure that all schools get equitable funding distribution but attempt to accommodate the greater needs of the schools in poorer areas.

The many PTAs I have seen over the years function erratically and idiosyncratically at best, with most parents primarily interested in the needs of their own children. It is wrong to impose responsibility for the functioning of schools, in this era when most parents are working, on an exhausted parent population. Parents do not want to be unpaid school trustees.

My children have asked me what it is that is so upsetting to me about this Bill 104, and I have had to answer them, at the risk of frightening them, that I have not felt my society so threatened since the imposition of the War Measures Act 25 years ago. This is not hyperbole. I could not have predicted — nor, I suspect, could any other Ontarian — a piece of legislation creating a body that would be unaccountable to the electorate and unchallengeable in any court of law. I would not have believed that a government in Canada would have produced some of the wording that is in this bill. This is authoritarian legislation, and I find it nothing short of disgusting.

That this same body, the Education Improvement Commission, has omnipotence over the future of our children's education is chilling. I gather that I will have no recourse to complain — effectively silenced — should this appointed body decide to cancel the junior kindergarten program which my four-year-old this year has so completely enjoyed and thrived in, or the music program in my daughter's school which has resulted in many awards at the Kiwanis Festival, or the librarian who opens the doors to books and reading otherwise closed to many disadvantaged children, or the ESL programs which give new immigrant children a foothold in the system.

The transparent and evasive accounting methods used by this government to define what is involved in a classroom are a ludicrous ploy to deceive citizens that the Tories are not dangerously eroding the school system. Parents are not deceived. We know that a classroom includes a librarian, custodians, a principal and vice-principal, art and music and physical education, as well as ESL, special education, and psychological support.

When the government takes \$600 million out of the education budget, parents are not deceived that these cuts do not affect the classroom. We remember promises made by Mr Harris to the contrary and we are not fooled by didiculous attempts to redefine what the classroom is. We are enraged when we hear both the Premier and the Minister of Education suggest that there is another \$1 billion that can be trimmed from the education budget, because we know that the so-called fat has been trimmed to the bone and that any further cuts are going to directly diminish our children's education.

I think the government is gravely misguided if it feels that it can create a crisis and erode the schools of Ontario to the point where privatization or charter schools become a reasonable option. We are acutely aware of the effects of underfunding education: fewer teachers, larger classes, inadequate supplies and a degenerating education for every school child in the system. Ontarians value highly their public school system, and rightly. It is a superior, award-winning system and it is accessible to all. Do not tamper with it.

The minister has spoken frequently about equalizing funding across the province. The parents I hear are emphatic that funding not be equalized by reducing it to the lowest funding level in the province. They also are aware that Ontario ranks sixth in Canada, behind Quebec and ahead of only the maritime provinces, in per student funding. This is a public shame on the wealthiest province in Canada

Parents also know that the government has to find money for its tax cut, but parents effectively forced to pay out user fees for what used to be education essentials know this tax cut is a shell game. We will not stand by and watch this government steal money from our children's education funding to pay for their election promise. Likewise, parents will not be enlisted in a campaign against union rights.

Education is not all about tax dollars and funding. It informs and shapes our children and our society's future. Bill 104 is part of an attack on our public education system. The anger and the outrage that you hear in this room are just the beginning. The parents of Ontario hold the education system dear, and this government has not been given the mandate to eviscerate it.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Blackett. Interruption.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, for those of you who are new to the committee, we don't allow any public outbursts. We are subject to the rules of the Legislature in that regard. It also takes time away from the presenters, and they have very little time as it is.

Thank you very much. You've used all of your time,

and we thank you for your presentation.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Madam Chair: There may be many reasons for this, so I'm not trying to be unfair, but I note that there is no representative of the ministry present in the committee. There may be some in the audience, but there is no one here before the committee to whom we can direct questions if we have questions re 104. I'm wondering how we deal with this.

For instance, coming from this very eloquent presentation, I had hoped to ask a representative of the ministry why the government is taking a different approach under Bill 104 from what they took in 1968, when there was a significant amalgamation of school boards. In 1968, the then Conservative government did not appoint a commission like the EIC to run schools and run school budgets for three years or even for a very short time. There was no such commission appointed. I'd like to know the reason for the different approach. Completely separate from whether or not they should be doing what they're doing under Bill 104, I'd like to know why they are approaching it in such a different way from the previous Davis government. Since there's no one here from the ministry, I'm wondering what we do. How do we get these questions answered?

The Chair: Mr Wildman, I understand it's practice that the parliamentary assistant be here, but it's not required. My suggestion would be that we make note of those questions and that we ask him about those questions when he arrives.

**Mr Wildman:** I understand your difficulty, Chair, but frankly, I consider it an insult to the committee and to all of the people who have come to make presentations that there is nobody here representing the minister to hear what they have to say.

Interjections.

The Chair: Excuse me, ladies and gentlemen. I've asked the clerk to inquire about the parliamentary assistant, but as I indicated, it's a practice.

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): In fact, Madam Chair, there are two parliamentary assistants to the Minister of

Education. Surely one of them could be here, and I think the committee should formally make that request. Either Mr Young or Mr Skarica has an obligation, if the minister is not here, for one of them to be here, I believe. Otherwise, what do we need them for? That's a good question in and of itself.

Mrs Johns: It's my understanding that Mr Skarica will be here in the next half-hour, and maybe we could

continue this debate when he gets here.

The Chair: If that's acceptable, we'll note the question, Mr Wildman, and ask it of Mr Skarica when he arrives.

## PETER SIMONSEN

The Chair: May I ask Peter Simonsen to come forward. Thank you very much for being with us this morning. You have 10 minutes for your presentation, and if time permits, the committee will ask you some questions.

Mr Peter Simonsen: It's going to be very close whether I'll make it or not.

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Bill 104 does not

go far enough for the following reasons:

There is no assurance that the redundant administrators will not find their way on to the payroll of the remaining boards; on the contrary, one can be almost certain that they will;

There is no indication that the cost of administration of 46% will be cut to 2% or 3%, as one would expect of a

well-run operation, public or private;

It does not address the question of returning the responsibility and prerogative of educating children to where it belongs, namely with parents;

It does not address the question of compulsion versus

voluntarism; and

It does not address the question of school choice.

Earl Manners has said, "This is not about balancing the budget; it is about redistributing wealth to the upper class." Question: Who is the upper class today? Who is the ruling class? Who is crowding the airports and US 75 during the March break? Who is able to extract outrageous property taxes and 50% of workers' incomes for salaries, benefits, job security and early generous pensions that those who produce the wealth can only dream of?

Answer: It is the public servants generally. The educators control the whole system from their power base in the educational institutions. People with letters after their names control the public personnel offices, and they hire only their own kind for all but manual work and control the latter via the union bosses. They also write the laws in the ministries, which are then enacted by the intelligentsia in the Legislature, who are part of the system of extracting the value of the productive efforts of others. No ruling class in history has extracted such high taxes as the intelligentsia. Kings, priests and feudal lords would have had pitchforks through their bellies at much lower rates.

# 1000

The Harris government has given the job of cutting to the administrators, so who is being cut? Welfare recipients, nurses and front-line hospital workers, services to the sick and elderly, bottom-rung civil servants; not the outrageously paid administrators, not the groups with powerful unions.

The power of educators is derived from their ability to keep our children captive in a flawed compulsory system. I am sure we have all felt reluctance when we were forced by others to do something, and we have completed the task only to the extent that we felt threatened. We can force our kids to sit on a school bench for 12 years, but it is most difficult to force them to absorb what is being taught if they are not interested. Therefore school is for many an enormous waste of time.

Many of our young people reach the age of 18 without acquiring the literacy and numeracy skills they need to function in society. Furthermore they have not acquired any marketable workplace skills. It is dangerous for a society to simply dismiss a large portion of its youth as simply waste. You are all aware that when the government spends money to create jobs for youth, it goes to the university students and high school graduates. Those who really need a chance get nothing, and yet it is often their parents who get to pay the taxes to support the élite.

On the next page you will find a guest editorial from Investor's Business Daily. The chart describes how much various countries spend and how they fared in reading improvement between ages nine and 14. It would be reasonable to assume that reading skills reflect performance in other subjects. From the experience of working with high school graduates in a Canadian bank for six years around 1960, being an employer for many years, and having two children go through the system, I am of the opinion that Ontario's performance is close to that of the US. I believe we spend about \$7,000 to keep a child in school for a year. You will note that the Netherlands performed second-best on the test while spending half as much as Ontario. The Netherlands have a voucher system used by 65% of Dutch kids to attend private, mostly religion-oriented, schools.

Denmark scored highest while spending about \$1,500 less than Ontario. Denmark is a high-cost, high-wage country whose GDP per capita is more than 50% higher than Canada's. Denmark has a voucher system used by 25% of Danish kids. Vouchers are used by religious and ethnic groups, but the alternative schools have their roots in a constituency that believes not only in the separation of church and state but also in the separation of school and state. This makes sense to me. After all, would you want Mike Harris or Bob Rae or Earl Manners or Liz Barkley or changing governments to decide who should teach your kids and what they should learn? My answer is, "No thanks." All Danish apprentices receive a voucher they can take to the technical school of their choice.

About 1960 in Ontario, the small rural and village schools were closed by edict from on high, thereby removing one of the essential cornerstones of community. A similar move was afoot in Denmark about the same time, but the farmers and village folks there said, "Wait a minute; we will vote on it." Many of these schools were taken private by parent groups under existing legislation. The alternative schools are called friskoler and are basically outside government influence. The elected boards hire their own teachers, try to hire good

ones and then leave them to do their jobs, For the most part these schools will not hire teachers certified for the public system because of philosophical differences. There are teachers' colleges catering to friskoler, but there is no

requirement for a teaching certificate.

To start a friskole, a group of parents form a self-owned institution and register it with the Ministry of Education. If there is an existing school, they simply take it over. If not, they must collect one sixth of the cost of building a new one from their members. The government supplies 50% and the remaining third can be borrowed from the banks. Denmark has self-owned trustee banks in most communities. Upon registration, the counties are obligated to turn over to these schools 90% of what it costs to keep a child in the public system. If it costs more to operate the school, the parents pay extra. It should be noted that the parents control the budget.

Education is paid for from income taxes. In fact, property taxes are almost non-existent in Denmark by Ontario standards. A former Minister of Education stated that it was his mission to facilitate learning but not to control it. His children attended a friskole. Eric Malling stated on the CTV program W5 that Denmark's Ministry of Education had only 50 employees. Last I heard,

Ontario's ministry had 2,700.

In some ways I feel sorry for Ontario teachers. If I were to teach a class of children well, I would have to use my own initiative and creativity to get the children on side. I would want to teach the small ones in all subjects for several years in order to have a personal relationship with them and provide a continuity in their lives. Indeed, I would hope to love them, as I'm sure the teacher I had in the little red school house in West Jutland loved us all. I would like to have it so that my kids would visit me in my old age as I visited my teacher the last couple of times I was in Denmark.

I could not be a teacher in Ontario because I would have numerous Big Brothers looking over my shoulder, telling me how to do things, and if my salary was worth the price of my soul, I would be trying to put on a performance that I thought my overseers would like. I would have to be obedient to my union bosses, abandon the kids when told to. If it turned out that I was an ineffective teacher. I could not be fired —

Interiections.

The Chair: Can I just interrupt you for a moment. Ladies and gentlemen, the presenter may not be expressing wishes that you particularly endorse, but he has a perfect right to speak. I would ask you to wait your turn to make your points. Please continue.

Mr Simonsen: — as long as I went along with the system. Why? I might even become an administrator and receive a raise in pay and a pension at 55 in any case.

Where the children fit in is well illustrated in Durham region. The trustees have built a Taj Mahal for its administrators with \$1.2 million worth of marble in the foyer, while half the children in the region spend most of their school years in portables.

Do not get the impression that nothing is rotten in Denmark. Its public schools and its society in general suffer from many of the same problems we have here in Ontario. I have been quoted in the papers over there extolling the things we do well here, particularly back in the 1960s.

My recommendations: Abolish all the school boards and fire all the administrators. I would very much resent paying taxes towards a settlement to these people. They have received a lengthy education at taxpayers' expense while I've paid for any schooling I received beyond the of age 14 from my own earnings. Furthermore I have never been paid for not working.

Have an elected, unpaid committee of parents with the power to hire and fire run each school. Schools should be small enough that all the parents can get to know one another. The aim should be to hire a principal in whom

they can have faith and leave him to it.

Reduce the Ministry of Education to that of a facilitator with a maximum of 100 employees.

Take away the teacher certificate monopoly. Let school committees hire anyone who is good at teaching and make financial arrangements on a competitive basis.

Provide each child with a certificate for \$3,500 per year, which they can take to the school of their choice. This would come from provincial income taxes. For higher education or skills training, supply an equal amount for every young person or nothing. That is only fair.

The Ontario government will not be able to balance its budget and provide meaningful reforms unless it pulls the rug from under union bosses. It can only be done by

passing right-to-work legislation.

In the 1960s I used to say that once you can read, it's all in the books and that learning in a school is very inefficient. With computers and the Internet and the speed with which small kids figure these things out, one is tempted to recommend the abolition of schools altogether. Schools may indeed be relics from the industrial age which are being kept alive in order to provide income for a redundant intelligentsia.

We must develop an apprenticeship system such as they have in Germany or Denmark. My two brothers were journeymen earning a journeyman's wage at age 18. It should be accessible to all, particularly those who are at risk of not entering the workforce. The average age of an apprentice in this country is 23, and you need an uncle in the union to be accepted. Any cost could simply come out of the savings in the police department and in the justice system.

1010

I learned English from a correspondence course in my spare time while working six and a half days a week on the farm. In three years I could speak, read and write almost as well as I can today. It cost me \$37. I did it on my own volition and I was motivated. If our kids are motivated to learn, we can close the schools because we will not be able to prevent them from learning. Everything in the course was written both in regular English and in phonetics. For what it is worth, I would not have been able to do it without phonetics. My use of English is by no means perfect, but to potential critics I will quote my fellow countryman, Victor Borge: "It's your language. I'm just trying to use it."

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Simonsen. You've used up all your time. We thank you for coming.

Mr Simonsen: Thanks for listening to me.

# ERROL YOUNG CHERYL PRESCOD

**The Chair:** Could I ask Errol Young to come forward, please. Welcome, Mr Young.

Mr Errol Young: Thank you. I'm bringing a friend with me.

The Chair: All right. You and your friend have 10 minutes.

Mr Young: I'm a trustee from ward 5 in North York, your constituent, and I'd like to introduce another constituent of yours, Cheryl Prescod, who's the chair of the Derrydown parents' council. I'll let her speak.

Ms Cheryl Prescod: Madam Chair and members of the committee, my name is Cheryl Prescod. I am not only the chair of the parent-teacher council at Derrydown in

North York but I'm a concerned parent.

Derrydown Public School has approximately 750 students, from junior kindergarten to grade 5. It offers a regular English program as well as a French immersion program. Children attending Derrydown come from the surrounding community, the nearby York University campus and from 11 other public schools in North York that do not offer French immersion. It has an effective special education and an English-as-a-second-language program. The latter is particularly essential, considering that approximately 43% of Derrydown students speak a language other than English as their first language. In fact, students at Derrydown come from about 36 different countries and many are recent immigrants to Canada. This is not unlike many schools in Metro Toronto, where the rich cultural diversity of the school community must be acknowledged and respected.

The administrators at Derrydown encourage parent and community involvement in the education of our children. They provide open communication with teaching staff and are accountable to all parents at all times. These are only some of the features of North York schools which enable me and all parents to ensure that our children are receiving the quality education they are entitled to.

With this in mind, I'm very concerned about the possible consequences of the Fewer School Boards Act,

Bill 104

First, I'm afraid that parents and the community will have little or no say in the educational programs and services offered at their local schools because our tax dollars no longer fund education. The province has announced that funding will be cut by approximately 25%. These cuts may affect transportation services, which will not only have our children walking longer distances to school but may have an impact on accessibility to programs. It may also force schools to cut programs such as JK, French immersion, ESL, special ed and adult education courses. Another possible consequence of these cuts will be preferred education for those who can afford to pay for the special programs, and the less fortunate will have to settle for whatever is available and may receive a substandard education. I truly hope that this is not what we're moving towards in Canada.

Second, if the province does take over education funding, will Metro schools get their fair share? Will the special needs of Metro students be factored into the formula determining pupil costs? Toronto has a dispro-

portionately large number of high-need students; that is, students from disadvantaged socioeconomic families and a large number of new immigrants. These groups place considerable demands on the school system in Metro, creating additional costs. Under these circumstances we must wonder about the fate of our children and the quality of education under the proposed scheme.

Third, this new educational proposal creates a bureaucracy not unlike some of the federally funded programs that our provincial government objects to. Educating our children should be a team effort, with all levels of government aiming for the same goals. For example, how can we justify putting more money into improving our research facilities in our universities while at the same time increasing tuition fees for post-secondary education and cutting funds to other parts of the education system? If our students are not learning effectively in elementary and high school and cannot afford to pursue post-secondary studies, how can they be expected to occupy these state-of-the-art facilities and compete globally?

It is quite understandable that the introduction of Bill 104 is an attempt to save money by reducing school boards' costs and putting more money into the classroom. However, I fear that the needs of each student will be lost in the mega-boards. What is the cost of putting our children's education at risk, and who will be held

accountable?

At this point I'd like to turn it over to my trustee, who is always available to me as a parent in my community. I can pick up the phone and call him at any time and he responds to my needs.

Mr Young: Thank you. I didn't pay for that introduc-

I'm a little disappointed that we're in this room and not in the other one. I understand what's happening, but it does seem symbolic that sewers are getting more attention than education. Sewers are very important, but so are children, and I'm also personally a little miffed that I spent about half an hour figuring out how to get my VCR to tape the other committee.

I want to talk about Bill 104, naturally, in this room. Bill 104 is not about unifying school boards, because it's irrelevant how many school boards you have; you're not going to save any money. It's not about reducing waste in education. It's not about lowering my salary as a trustee. It's not even about lowering the deficit. If that's what you want to do, you're not going to do it through this thing. It's about financially redistributing income, money, services from the poor and middle classes and putting them into the pockets of the rich. That's all it's about. That's what this government has said by its action it's going to do.

It's about getting provincial hands on, for the first time, the coveted cash cow of Metro tax dollars. You're going to do that through this, and it's with glee that you're doing it. It's part of a whole scheme of things about lowering quality of housing, health care, child care, long-term care and naturally education. That's what this bill is about. It's part of that scheme. Only those who can afford to pay for it, as your previous speaker wanted, will get quality services, not the people who are building the

wealth in Canada, the workers of this country.

The first stage is clear. You've made it clear. The minister has made it clear. He's going to take one quarter of our budget away from Metro. He's going to take \$500 million out, and he says not out of the classroom. That's PR garbage. The new board is going to have to take some action because it won't have the budget. It's going to cut junior kindergarten. You may not value junior kindergarten. Torontonians do. It's going to cut services to English as a second language and special education. It's going to do that. It's going to cut building maintenance and it's got to increase class sizes; it has to. Those are the services we're going to have.

What is the government going to do? The government is going to look at our school systems three or four years from now and say: "They're failing. Public schools are failing. We need another system." They're going to set up charter schools, which is what the previous speaker wanted. The reason they're going to set up charter schools is because the public school is failing. Charter schools will divide Canada and divide Ontario on religious, ethnic and economic lines. The poor shall not learn as well as the rich, shall not get the quality of services

that the rich have.

It's an abomination that children with very little or low income could actually be in French immersion. That's what happens in Derrydown. We have an inner-city French immersion school in Derrydown. It's a wonderful thing to see. It's multicultural and it's serving Ontario

very well.

Picture downtown, if you will — I know I only have a few minutes more - after you're finished with Bill 103. Bill 104 etc. You will have the flight of the business and middle class out of a high property tax area because we're going to cut services down there, but we're also going to raise property taxes. You're going to have the rich, your friends, living in armoured condominiums on the waterfront. They'll have their security guards, they'll have their systems, they'll have their buzzers, they'll have everything. There will be bad services and bad schools for the rest of the people living in downtown Toronto. It will be the Chicago of the north. The government will blame school boards, they will blame single parents, and they will blame immigrants. They will, but the people of Toronto will know who's responsible. The people will remember who voted for 104, and 103. It's a shameful bill. If you vote for it, we will remember. We may not vote directly for you but we will remember. Seeing the Premier shivering in a hockey arena will not convince us that this is good for Toronto; it won't. All your PR doesn't work. We will remember and we will resist. 1020

Last week the government members went out into the community to spread the good word and they couldn't get a word in edgewise. You may think there was an organized band against you; there wasn't. There were just people. That's the most wonderful thing about these bills, Madam Chair. The most wonderful thing is that people from all parties — I was at a meeting yesterday that you were at — are coming together against what the government is doing, people from all economic levels are coming together, people from all ethnicities are coming together, uniting in Toronto against this bill.

If you want to pit Toronto against the rest of the province, you've done it, and we will remember. The economic engine of Canada, which is Toronto and the greater Toronto area, will take retribution. The way we'll do it is through the ballot box, naturally, and we'll do it through demonstrations. But just let Vanstone and Cooke, with their educational impediment committee, try to do something against what we're doing and you'll see the reaction here. We will not be responsible for what happens; you will.

Interruption.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, please, no outbursts. I want to thank you both for coming, Ms Prescod and Mr Young. You've used up all of your time.

#### ABBY BUSHBY

The Chair: May I ask Abby Bushby to come forward. Thank you very much for coming.

Could I ask for some quiet, please. I would ask the audience please to allow the presenters to speak without

any interference.

Ms Abby Bushby: My name is Abby Bushby. I'm a parent at Howard Public School, a member of ward 2 parents' council, and I've been active in education finance reform in Toronto over the last year and a half. My simple statement is this: I think the case for provincial takeover of education is weak, without a goals-driven purpose or guarantees of standards, and it has lost credibility because of the province's chaotic messages on spending cuts over the last one and a half years. Toronto schools are particularly vulnerable because we spend more than the provincial average on special needs education.

Students, parents, grandparents and teachers of Howard school wrote letters to the Minister of Education in October with our concerns about the lack of vision in education reform. We expressed dismay that the conversation had little to do with what is desirable in quality education befitting Ontario's values and abilities. Unfortunately, the promise to achieve reform without creating adverse impacts on the classroom is not working. Class sizes have grown, enrolment increased without enough new teachers to meet the demand, junior kindergarten has been rendered optional despite its critical importance, and we fear the loss of our valued gym, library and music programs as taught by specialized teachers as would occur with your removal of preparation time. As late as November 1996, we were being told that this was still an option.

We want to see an education reform process that guarantees the maintenance of what is good about public education and provides commitments to improve service where lacking. We ask that the reform process be guided by a set of educational ideals. Proposals for reform should be established in light of the goals, tested for the effects on those goals and altered if they create adverse impacts. We ask the minister to begin any reform process guided by a vision of the essential school. You received a copy of the essential school project with the submission of Kathleen Wynne on February 17. It seeks to include in a basic education essentials that I hope you are familiar with, and I won't go over now for the purposes of time.

The minister's response in his letter to us dated in December was one of interest in some, very few, aspects. His new vision for education is "based on a rigorous and demanding curriculum for every grade...including reading, writing, spelling, grammar, mathematics, science, geography and Canadian history." This emphasizes only that which can be measured, omits much and leaves the chance of a well-rounded education just that — open to chance.

Our own MPP, Derwyn Shea, has advised that the province is to engage in a public process of defining education standards. The process may be one of permitting the restricted school boards to set local goals. Well. I ask, what is it? Is the new education to be of provinceled standards or is it to be a system of local options that may trade off basic elements of a decent education? The example we talked of was junior kindergarten. There was quite a bit of solid research on the importance of early education. Why has the province not committed to it, in fact rendered it optional last year, and why has it not committed to other necessary components of a basic education? To permit this local option system is to permit more variation in the provincial system than exists now. So we ask, what is the purpose of provincial takeover if it is not to ensure high standards for all students in the province?

The Toronto Board of Education is quite correct to assert a bill of rights for Toronto public schools. It largely defines the high quality of education which we presently deliver. David Moll delivered copies to you in his submission of February 17. Provincial takeover must do the same or better or leave well enough alone. Our children are not to be subjected to vagueness, instability or, worse, what appears to be a pared-down education.

Our children do not vote. We speak for them. There is unrest across Ontario. I believe the province recognizes this because of the cataclysmic changes in intention that we have witnessed over the past year and a half. At this time last year the province was threatening to take over preparation time. My daughter, who struggles with a mild perceptual learning hurdle, knows how to achieve excellence because of our highly qualified, specialized music teacher. She knows what it means to be first. As a parent, I'm concerned about her self-identity. I'm not worried about that as long as there are other components in the system that will let her achieve until she works out this special education problem.

As late as November, Terence Young was still saying the province was looking to save the entire cost of \$1 billion in preparation time. Then a few days before Christmas the minister announced a delay in cuts until after school boards are reorganized. A few days after his January 13 address, we have found that the education envelope will remain the same and then on February 17, before this committee, apparently the minister suggested there may be money put back into the system. Is this a guarantee?

It is not enough to say that the present amount of money in education will remain the same. When the province intends to inject more money into the separate school system, we in the public system expect cuts to be made. Numerous studies have shown that people in Ontario favour one non-denominational board with accommodation for religious training. We need to see leadership on this. Newfoundland is displaying more foresight than Ontario in this matter.

Going from hither to yon, without an overall direction to which people have had direct participation, smacks of an instability that our values in Ontario do not tolerate.

The wisdom of local control has not been met by the province's plans announced to date. Toronto pioneered inner-city programming. We spend more on educating the poor, the marginalized, recent immigrants and students needing special education, all of which are present in Toronto in greater numbers than anywhere in Canada. It's the opposite of what a market-based system will do. Yet we educate Toronto's children to the same or best of large urban standards.

The programs need mentioning because they're so important: higher staff allocations for designated innercity schools, early childhood education starters, books for supplementary take-home reading, special projects like the Parkdale 2000 music program, secondary school tutoring, targeted student support for alienated youth to return to school. Without adequate funding for these programs, the students of low-income, troubled, single-parent or non-English-speaking families have greater disadvantages to overcome with fewer personal resources. And this is not a service that benefits Torontonians locally only. Well-educated students of diverse backgrounds contribute to a better future for all people of Ontario and Canada.

It is not just students in need that want these programs. Without quality education in public schools, all residents will suffer. In a class of 30 or more if some children are hungry, without guidance, needing special education or ESL, education for all will suffer.

1030

We do not favour much increase in the power of parents to run schools. We in Toronto already have had good input to principal and vice-principal selection, board policies, staffing committees and so on. We already know that the students in more affluent areas with more parent resources get more volunteers and do more fund-raising. For these things, Howard, our school, fares better than other schools in ward 2. We fund-raise about \$11,000, \$12,000 a year. Parkdale and Queen Vic, inner-core, inner-city schools, fund-raise about \$200 or \$300 a year. In schools north of Toronto, they fund-raise two to three times the amount of us.

If more powers to influence the school are given to parents, the outlook for inner-city schools is further blackened. What is happening to the public interest? If we are to merely look out for our own kids, what about the disparity between schools? If the Minister of Education is not looking out for the public interest and public education, then who is?

There's one thing I think this government could do to enhance its credibility with parents who are deeply concerned about cuts to education. It's to support the private member's bill, Bill 110, the Smaller Class Sizes Act. Please put it to committee hearings. I'm sure you will hear a lot of response in favour of it.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Bushby, for appearing before us. We have one minute for questioning.

We begin with the official opposition. One quick ques-

Mrs McLeod: Could you comment for me on — it's a bit of a leading question. I acknowledge it — your sense of the appropriateness of Ontario's spending something in excess of 2% above the national average on education? It's not 10%, incidentally, which is the figure that's commonly used to suggest that we are wildly overspending in Ontario education. But would you comment on the appropriateness of having a goal that would take Ontario spending down to the national average or below it?

Ms Bushby: Ontario leads the country in standards in many ways. People come here from all over the country with good resources to share. Some of the best industries, commercial development and so on are here. If we are training students to meet these national standards which are present here in Ontario and in Toronto, then let's not do away with that.

Second, we know that the vast majority of immigrants to Canada come to Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. We must spend more. We know that in Metro at present there are more poor children than there are in the Atlantic provinces. We cannot cut education.

Mr Wildman: I suppose you're probably aware that the minister has said there will be further cuts in 1998. There won't be in 1997, but he has said there will be in 1998. I have a short question. You mentioned the bill of rights that Chair Moll of the Toronto board has put forward as the rights of all kids to education. Would you favour an amendment to this bill which would incorporate that bill of rights as part of Bill 104, if Bill 104 is to go forward?

Ms Bushby: Oh, yes. I would see a whole new set of committee hearings on that. There are many people in Toronto who would like to take part in this committee and have not been called yet. I personally know about six people, and they would like to speak directly to that issue.

Mr Wildman: Again, I understand that Mr Skarica is on his way. I would like to ask the ministry if the ministry would entertain such an amendment to Bill 104, the incorporation of the bill of rights, as the right of every kid in Ontario to education under Bill 104.

The Chair: We'll note that for Mr Skarica.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): Thank you very much for coming. As we all know, education is a very, very important part of all of our lives in Ontario. Every province of every political stripe has looked at education and, if we look across the province, at reducing school boards. Every government has done it or has looked at it and is looking at it, as I said before.

There have been numerous studies by consultants and consultation. We all know this. All three political parties in Ontario, the Liberals, the NDP and our party, have said that they would reduce school boards. Part of the reason is, and it's understandable, we're all concerned about getting those dollars that are being spent on administration. We have seen reports in the newspapers of the spending that has been done by boards, by different governments, into buildings and so on.

The Chair: Mr Froese, could I ask you to put your

question.

Ms Bushby: I think I know what you're getting at.

Mr Froese: Everybody's concerned about the issue. I guess what I'm not hearing, and I'd like to hear it more from the presenters, and we've heard some this morning. is constructive examples and constructive criticism of how we can change things to make it better. You're heavily involved, as your bio says, as a volunteer and being involved with parents and the parents' advisory committee. When we need to change things, such as the parents' involvement in school councils, we're hearing that more parents want to be involved. Could you give any suggestions on how we strengthen the role of the parent in the school system or in our education system?

Ms Bushby: First of all, as a pre-issue on that, I don't believe at this point that the case has been made for taking away the school boards. The Sweeney report was given the task of finding out how to cut without looking at the wisdom of it. The wisdom of cutting was looked at by the Royal Commission on Learning and they found that local boards are doing a good job of the present programs as delivered. That's not to say that it needs to be carved in stone, but if the province wants to take over what school boards do now, you must set a minimum, at least guarantee the standards of the bill of rights.

The Chair: I regret we've gone way beyond the time

allotted. Thank you very much for coming.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): Just a quick question. Earlier there were comments made about the amount of spending per student in various jurisdictions. I'd like to request from the Ministry of Education their numbers with respect to the dollars spent by Ontario versus other Canadian jurisdictions and other foreign jurisdictions with respect to dollars spent on per pupil education. I recollect seeing those numbers somewhere, but I would appreciate it if we could get them.

**The Chair:** We'll note that for the ministry.

## HEIDI KREINER-LEY

The Chair: Heidi Kreiner-Ley. Thank you for coming. You have 10 minutes to make your presentation.

Ms Heidi Kreiner-Ley: Good morning, members of the committee. My name is Heidi Kreiner-Ley. I am a resident, taxpayer and parent of the Richmond Hill community in York region. My children attend St Mary Immaculate Catholic Elementary School in Richmond Hill and I am the chair of the Catholic school council and PTA president.

I have been involved in education issues in our community for numerous years. I have made many presentations to our school board, to the Royal Commission on Learning and to this province over the last number of years. I have concerns with many of the changes that are occurring in education and wish to put some of these concerns forward to you today.

Bill 104 has many good aspects and if carried out with its best intentions, in many areas will provide a better education system for our children. However, there are some areas that many of us need clarification on and some areas that require revision or additions to satisfy the concerns of the parents and educators of our children today.

One area that concerns me is that of our trustees. The cutting of the number of trustees may satisfy many people in this province, but I believe we still need strong representation at each of our boards. The public should vote these people in as in the past and they should be held accountable. If it is the intention of this province to eventually do away with trustees as we know them today and replace them with school councils, then I believe that the volunteers who have put themselves forward as members of these school councils must be protected legally in the same way as trustees are today.

Liability and commitment issues must be addressed. Today's members of school councils have the opportunity to quit at any time and their commitment to the amount of work and effort is purely volunteer. I know that in many schools it has been difficult to even obtain a good number of people to actually join the school councils. What will happen in school communities such as these?

Another concern pertaining to trustees is the fact that this government has disqualified a number of people from being permitted to run as trustee. Over the years I have witnessed the important input of teacher trustees and trustees who are spouses of teachers. Their positive contribution to decisions made at the board level by far outweighs the few times they have needed to declare a conflict of interest.

With this province taking away many areas of responsibility from the trustees, in particular areas that would have been deemed a conflict, what is the purpose of disqualifying them now? Their knowledge of the classroom demographics and educational concerns is still vitally needed by the board. They can advise their peers how certain decisions will affect the classroom directly.

In this ruling, I believe this province has erred and they should not prohibit teachers and spouses from running as trustees. If it were such a concern to the public, why has one of our trustees in Richmond Hill, who is a teacher, been re-elected for 18 years? He has always done an excellent job representing us.

With respect to the Education Improvement Commission that is explained in Bill 104, I have concerns as well. In many ways I agree with the concept. Across the province we have seen far too much spent on administration and the glorifying of itself and not enough spent directly in the classroom. I applaud this province in its efforts to correct this. Let us hope, however, that we are not just creating another level of expensive administration. Please assure that members of this commission do not receive outlandish salaries with outlandish retirement packages and are provided with an unnecessarily large staff.

I wish to request that this government assure that in its appointment of members to this commission, representatives of the major school boards are appointed. I, in particular, wish to know that a member of the Catholic community is representing us and that our uniqueness is brought to the table at the commission. This must be the case to ensure fairness and equality and that no bias exists within the commission.

Will this new Education Improvement Commission be willing to listen directly to parents and stakeholders in the

community, or will they be distanced from the general public who have concerns about education? Will they hold regular public forums to hear from us, or will they only be fed what the board and administration want them to hear? As the commission has extensive controls and power, it is imperative that before they make decisions that will affect communities directly, they obtain input from that community. How will this process take place?

When reading through Bill 104, it refers to strengthening the role of school councils. I, as chair of a current school council, wish to advise you as follows: I believe this is an excellent idea, but four topics spring to mind when this is discussed: caution, liability, accountability and lobby groups or special interest groups.

Caution: This province must move cautiously in handing over responsibility to school councils and it cannot be done overnight. Many school councils are still floundering and do not understand their direction and role. Further in-servicing and hands-on workshops would give us the direction that is needed.

Liability and accountability: I've touched on this briefly before. My concern as a member of a school council is that if we are given more far-reaching responsibilities, as stated in the bill, and we make a decision that adversely affects someone, will we be liable? Can we be sued and held accountable; and to what extent?

I believe this is a serious concern. If the answer cannot be defined and school council members are not certain, you may find that it will be even more difficult to find people in the school or the community interested in putting everything they own on the line for a volunteer position.

As in every political forum, lobby groups and special interest groups are present. These can come in the form of a small group in a school or as the school council itself. Will we witness individual schools vying for favours from our board and how will this be monitored? Will, once again, the squeaky wheels get the grease? How do we mandate that a global vision must be kept by each school council and not only what is best for their school? The best interests of all students within each school district and the province must always be present in major decision-making issues. That will be a difficult sell, if not impossible.

With respect to the auditing role of the Education Improvement Commission, it is my belief they must extend some leniency to each board. Each community has its special needs, as you have heard today, be it based on location, percentage of special students, ethnic population etc.

In our board it is junior kindergarten, and the stake-holders in our region have spoken loudly over the past number of years to our board not to cut this crucial program. Our communities have even been willing to endure minor tax increases to help assist in maintaining this important educational program. I believe the commission should permit a certain percentage of the budget to be discretionary for each board, provided that the discretionary amount is spent for the benefit of their students' education.

Another concern also refers to the Education Improvement Commission. Are we, the everyday, busy, concerned parent and citizen, going to be sucked into a quagmire of bureaucracy and approvals? Having anything done at the school level today takes months, even years, and reams of paperwork. Will this new commission create another hurdle for our schools? Will parents and school administrators become more disillusioned with the lack of action? How can we be certain the audit authority given to the commission will not tie things up even longer?

What avenue do parents have if the commission has all-encompassing powers and cannot even be questioned or reviewed in a court of law? What happens if a decision made by the Education Improvement Commission, a group that is separated from the communities, affects a community in an adverse way? Who will answer to that community? Will their only alternative be at the polls years down the road?

There is one last concern I wish this committee to hear. It is regarding the non-teaching staff in our schools. I've been notified that this province wishes to contract out many of these positions. Please look at what you're doing again. Many things cannot be decided strictly for their forencial sayings.

their financial savings.

For example, our secretarial staff in our schools are much more than secretaries. I am a firsthand witness to that. These strong, dedicated people are surrogate moms, guidance counsellors, nurses, psychologists, babysitters, school community safety overseers. They know every child in our school, all 812 of them, by name and protect them to the very best of their ability in a very busy and very overcrowded school.

If these jobs were contracted out, there would be no consistency guarantees for our students. Their health and safety would be at risk, and especially in the elementary level their dedication to each and every student could be lost. They are more than just secretaries; they are part of a school family. Each and every teaching and non-teaching staff person is not just an employee in our school, they are a member of a school family. Your plans would destroy that family. I'm requesting that you reconsider your position on this matter. Any savings you think you could realize would be lost in many other ways.

I wish to thank you for providing me this opportunity to speak to you. My sincere hope is that this government is truly listening to the information and presentations, and not just marching forward with their mandate while at the same time making the public feel like they are doing this wonderful thing by allowing us to speak. This has been the way past governments have acted. You have said things are different now. Prove it to us.

The Chair: Ms Kreiner-Ley, thank you very much for your time. You've used it up very effectively.

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Mr Wildman: On a point of privilege, Madam Chair: I've noticed that the members of the party supporting the government on the committee have blue pamphlets on their desks which appear to be profiles of each witness, indicating who they are, where they come from and other details about them. I would like to know where these came from. Were they provided by the ministry or were they provided by some other source? I'd also like to know what they say and why they are here, and if they

are available to one party, why they are not available to the whole committee and to the public?

The Chair: Mr Wildman, I allowed you to complete your statement, but it's not a point of privilege.

Mrs Caplan: How about courtesy?
The Chair: Out of courtesy, but if the —
Interjections.

#### DEBBIE FIELD

**The Chair:** Could I ask Debbie Field to come forward. Ms Field, thank you for coming. Welcome to the committee.

Mr Wildman: Is anybody going to answer?

The Chair: It's not a point of privilege.

Ms Debbie Field: Can I ask a question? What does the blue paper say about me?

The Chair: You have 10 minutes to make your

presentation, Ms Field.

Ms Field: I'd like to ask the committee what the blue paper says about me. I was curious actually why I was picked to make a presentation when so many people have asked. I know so many parents in my neighbourhood; I was curious why I was picked. It was a great honour, but I'm just curious.

Mr Wildman: I've no idea what it says.

Ms Field: Okay. My name is Debbie Field. I'll return to that question. Perhaps somebody would provide me and others with an answer to that question. I think it's my public right, my charter right to know what it says.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Madam Chair: I witnessed a representative of the Ministry of Education distributing those blue packets this morning. I would assume that information that's made available to the government would be made available to the official opposition and to the third party, and I think before we proceed, we ought to have access to that.

Mr Wildman: Hear, hear. I agree with that complete-

The Chair: In the absence of the parliamentary assistant — this is certainly something we can put to him when he comes. I appreciate the concerns of the opposition with respect to that and perhaps the government will want to share that with the opposition. We will wait until Mr Skarica arrives to be able to address this issue.

**Mr Wildman:** I want to know frankly if this was prepared with taxpayers' funds. If it was prepared with taxpayers' funds, it should be available to all of the members of the committee and to the members of the public.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Wildman. Ms McLeod. Mrs McLeod: On the point of order my colleague Mr Duncan has raised in terms of material that is prepared by the Ministry of Education and distributed, it should be available to all members of the committee. There's also an understandable concern on the part of many of the people who are here who are aware that at at least one public forum government representatives had in their possession sheets which outlined the personal background of a number of the individuals who were going to be present and making representation at that forum.

They're concerned about being on a hit list, quite frankly, and if it is something much more innocent than

that, I think their fears should be put to rest.

The Chair: I understand the point that you've made and that Mr Duncan has raised and Mr Wildman. In the absence of Mr Skarica, there is very little the Chair can do, but we will refer it to Mr Skarica at the earliest possibility.

**Mr Wildman:** On a point of order, Madam Chair: There's a very simple approach here. We have members of the government party who have these in their possession. They can simply make them available to everybody else. Why do we have to wait for Mr Skarica?

The Chair: I've heard your point. We expect the parliamentary assistant to be here momentarily. I would like —

Mrs McLeod: I think we should have the presentation because we're concerned not to have enough time for presenters. In any event we are going to do so because of our commitment to hearing the presenters. If the opposition members were to leave at this moment, there would not be a quorum to hear the presentations. We think it's important to hear the members of the public who are here, so we should proceed.

The Chair: I thank you very much. We will take this up once Mr Skarica comes.

Mr Wildman: What have they got to hide? If there's

nothing in them that's a problem, give them to us.

The Chair: Mr Wildman, you know we're on a very limited time. Ms Field.

Ms Field: My name is Debbie Field. I am here in three capacities: as a parent of two children who attend a school in the west end of Toronto, as a founder of something called the Coalition for Student Nutrition and as executive director of FoodShare Metro Toronto. I will be presenting in all three capacities and speaking to issues on all three parts.

I'm going to start off with the most important part, which is my role as a parent. I have two children who are nine and 12. They attend a school in the west end of Toronto, as I've said: Fern Avenue Public School. Originally my husband, David Kraft, was going to be sitting here with me but he couldn't make it and I'll be speaking on his behalf, as well as Molly and Joe's.

I asked Molly and Joe what they wanted to convey to your committee. Joe, who has been reading the newspaper very carefully, has been very distressed to hear that in your calculations the government includes in non-classroom items such things as music, principals, vice-principals, secretarial staff, electricity. Gerry Caplan will be here later and he will be able to do a much better job than I in showing you all the places in which you have done that.

When Joe has been reading in this newspaper, he wanted me to convey to you that to him his music program is incredibly important and that he has done a research project on it which shows that children who are taught music, as well as math, do better on math tests than children who have not had music.

He wanted you to think very clearly as a government, if you are really interested in saving money, and I'm coming here to MPP Froese's question around saving — I, as a parent, have not asked you to save money by cancelling the music program in my children's school. I, as a parent and a taxpayer, have not asked you to save

money by eliminating secretarial staff in my children's office so that when my daughter, Molly, is sick, there is somebody there who knows her and is friendly, as the last speaker talked about. I, as a taxpayer, have not asked you to take what are absolutely fantastic world-class schools and wreck them.

One of the things before you as a government is to really think very seriously about how you want to be remembered by the people of Ontario. We have an absolutely fantastic school system. Here in the inner-city in Toronto, I live in a multiclass, multicultural neighbourhood in which it would be very easy to have lots of problems, and we don't. We have a great school because the Polish kids who are coming, the new immigrants who are coming from China and all over the world, have English-as-a-second-language programs. They need a budget which is bigger than a school perhaps that my sister-in-law attends in Burlington, where some of the issues are not quite as complex.

You can't have a cookie cutter that's going to work for the school in south Parkdale that's going to make the kids of south Parkdale productive citizens and have racial harmony that's going to be one, single budget across the province. You have to figure out a way to fund programs that are needed which will make everyone equal, and if you don't, what we'll have unfortunately are schools like the schools I grew up with. I grew up in New York City and I can remember watching the exact same process and how it happened. You know as well as I do what happened in that city.

What a lot of us are so mad about is that we feel you're rushing at such a break-neck pace to break something which is totally unbroken. What my husband was going to say when he presented was that our school in the west end of Toronto is a far safer school than the school he grew up with in suburban Burlington in the 1950s. There's less violence. There's less fighting. We have peacemaker programs. We have an incredible number of programs, which cost, again, more money.

These things cost more money but they have proven their value. From a business point of view, the trend you are moving in, which is to imagine you can cut administration and somehow make companies productive, is being disproven all across North America. You need a certain amount of administration to manage things appropriately. If you don't, you have things that don't work.

On behalf of Joe and Molly, I urge you not to be remembered as the government that wrecked the school system of the kids of Ontario. I would urge you to reconsider, that you can't both have cost cutting at a school level and continue to have the quality.

I want to move on and talk about the Coalition for Student Nutrition and education and I have a question first. I was going to ask this question of Minister Snobelen or somebody who's been involved in drafting the legislation. Is there anybody in the room who has been involved in drafting the legislation? Is there anybody who has worked on the legislation who could answer a question about Bill 104?

The Chair: We are awaiting the arrival of the parliamentary assistant. There are ministry officials to answer your questions.

Ms Field: My question is, in your deliberations in creating the legislation, what have you done around the issue of student nutrition?

The Chair: Do you want to put that directly to the minister?

Ms Field: I didn't want to waste my time talking if I didn't know what you've talked about. I haven't seen it, so I'm just curious; maybe there was something I hadn't seen. Is it mentioned? No. Okay.

Mrs McLeod: Guaranteed, it's not.

Ms Field: I have submitted as my presentation two pieces to you. Sorry, there aren't copies for everybody, but if you want extra copies we could get them. One is the proceedings of an annual conference called Nutri-Action, which I've been involved in organizing a couple of years in a row. In it there is an open letter to Mike Harris from a couple of years ago when we were asking him what he was planning to do about his Common Sense commitment to expanding student nutrition, and the second piece is an outline of a request for a community-based child nutrition program.

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In this is a submission that the group, the Coalition for Student Nutrition, made last year to the province around this issue. There is a specific request under section 2, which is called "Remove Legislative Barriers," if you could look at the bottom of the page and then turn it to the top, and it goes like this: "We therefore request that the Education Act be amended to promote school nutrition programs, school feeding programs, and the creation of positive venues for eating inside schools."

I'll take a minute to explain why this is important. We have an anomaly in Ontario. We are, in Canada and Ontario, among the only countries in the world that do not have a commitment to student nutrition. For some reason, we are way behind the United States on this, way behind every country in Europe, and we're way behind most of the countries in the developing world. In most countries in the world, there's an understanding that if people don't eat, they can't learn. There is a tremendous amount of research which proves this, yet for some reason that none of us can quite figure out, Canada has been behind every country in the world on this.

So in the 1980s a group of us formed the Coalition for Student Nutrition. Our commitment was to see if we could change the education system so that it provided venues for children to eat healthy meals during their school day. That's how the Coalition for Student Nutrition was born, a movement which has had quite a big impact, I think, all across the province. We have seen commitment from the previous NDP government and also the current Conservative government to do something about child nutrition.

The problem, however, is that we still have an Education Act which says, for example, by its silence that it is not possible to spend education dollars on food. All of us who organize at the grass-roots level face principals all across the province on a constant basis who say to us: "Come back after the Education Act has been amended. Until the Education Act has been amended, we will not consider programs a viable component of the day-to-day school." For example, we build whole schools and we

don't even build appropriate cafeterias or facilities where meals could be prepared.

Our movement has been sort of on the sidelines. We have started with breakfast. Most of us believe it is a universal snack and universal lunch which is where we want to go, because that's the only way you can reach all children. We have been moving along and we've made tremendous advances in some of our municipalities, primarily because of the trustees and the local school boards. Right now in the city of Toronto, where we have the most advanced programs of anywhere in Ontario, we have 42 programs existing.

We have a concern about what's going to happen to those programs if Bill 104 is adopted. We believe there's a role for the provincial education ministry to play in ensuring a certain bottom line all across the province. We also are very concerned, since you have not addressed it in any way, what you are planning on this and hope you will be able to address those concerns at some point.

The other thing is that, even though Mike Harris is a personal supporter of student nutrition, because of his past as a trustee, and even though it is mentioned in both the Common Sense Revolution and was mentioned in the throne speech last year, we are not pleased with what your government has done so far. You made a commitment in both the throne speech and in the Common Sense Revolution that you would do something for all kids connected to education — the allusion was very clear in the words I've given you — but what you did in fact was give a private charitable foundation, the Canadian Living Foundation, \$5 million and told them they should spend it in one year, which was not a very useful thing to do, and have not committed to ongoing funding.

In here as well we are asking that you look at ongoing, continuous funding. Student nutrition isn't a question of feeding a bunch of poor kids in a church basement one year and then it goes away, but all of our children eating appropriately healthy meals for the rest of their lives during their school day. I'd like to table this as a proposal from the Coalition for Student Nutrition.

Then I'd like to take a minute about my concern as executive director of FoodShare. In a couple of hours, myself and Sue Cox and Loren Freid and many of us who work with people who are using food banks are going to be doing a press conference in this building about our concerns with Bills 103 and 104 and downloading. Even though many of the government representatives I've talked to about this keep saying these are three separate things — Joe Spina was in a meeting with Derwyn Shea where Derwyn Shea admitted that he has a lot of problems with downloading, yet we should look at amalgamation and education separately. Many of us believe it is a package and we believe what is about to happen in terms of downloading is very, very serious, and it is connected to what you're deliberating about in terms of education

One of the few things I'm in favour of in what you are doing is putting education off the municipal tax base and on to the income tax base. That's something that all parties in this room and anybody who has studied the issue has always agreed has to happen. But the same logic has to be equal for welfare. You can't take a

position which says that education, as something that is done for the whole society, should be off the property tax base and somehow welfare should be on the property tax base at 50%, which is what you're suggesting. We think there has to be a rethink here in terms of what you're suggesting around welfare.

My own view around the way you could make right what you're doing on the education would be to slow down, look at a provision whereby funding can occur through the provincial tax base, which is a far fairer system than through the municipal base, but you still have boards of education which can do the fine-tuning and the community-based needs assessment that I talked about that exists at my kids' school.

In all these things, in 103 and 104 and downloading, you are rushing at an unbelievable pace. You are creating a crisis that doesn't exist. I can only say over and over again, slow down, take your time; otherwise, you really will destroy not only the education system but many other important institutions in the province.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Field. You've used up all of your time; unfortunately, there won't be any time for questions.

Ms Field: May I have a response around student nutrition and some idea about when you might be able to

respond to that?

The Chair: You raised the question. We can certainly put it to the ministry for you.

Ms Field: Could you get back to us? If you find out, can you contact the Coalition for Student Nutrition?

Mrs Caplan: We could request a written response.

The Chair: We certainly can request a written response from the minister regarding that, and that becomes public.

Mrs McLeod: On a point of order, Madam Chair: I'm becoming increasingly infuriated by the way in which the government is dealing with the hearings in this committee. We have seen that in open forums, in public forums, they are arriving with lists that outline the background of people who are not supportive of their position.

We now have the presentation of material that apparently is sufficiently secretive that we still haven't got a copy of it, even to glance at to reassure us that it's a purely innocent document that just provides some background information to government members. I don't understand why this document can't simply be sent across the table or sent to the Chair so that all the questions that are in people's minds can be put to rest.

We're through almost a full morning on hearings, and we have nobody present who is responsible for carriage of this legislation. I just think the government is making very blatant the sham they intended these hearings to be from the beginning. It's difficult to continue to participate

The Chair: Mrs McLeod, I appreciate your concerns. I don't want to take time from the presenters. My suggestion would be to take up this matter immediately after the presenters have concluded their presentations and we can have a full discussion with Mr Skarica also present.

Mr Wildman: Chair, I understand your position and the difficulty you have because of the large number who haven't been able to present and the large number we want to hear, who are only a small percentage of the total. But what is the purpose of making presentations if the government members don't say anything and we don't hear anything from the ministry and the ministry doesn't hear what anybody says?

The Chair: Mr Wildman, I understand, and your point has been made. I thank you for it. My advice is that we will deal with it after the presenters, with Mr Skarica, so

we can have a full hearing about it.

Interjection.

**The Chair:** Please, with respect, Ms Field, your presentation is over and I really would prefer not to have interruptions.

Mr Wildman: Mr Spina has something to say.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): Just a point, Madam Chair: I understand the situation and the frustration they may feel. In lieu of Mr Skarica being here, there is a research officer here. When questions are being posed, we might consider referring those questions to the research officer and then the response can come back to the committee via the research officer. That is an alternative the committee can —

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Spina. I think everyone is well aware that there are representatives from the ministry here. I don't believe that's the issue.

**Mr Wildman:** I thought Mr Spina was about to tell us what it says about Debbie Field on that paper.

The Chair: Mr Wildman, please.

Mrs McLeod: I serve as whip of the official opposition on this committee, and before the committee can proceed very much further we need to have some understanding as to exactly why we're here.

The reason the committee holds hearings on government legislation is presumably to have input to the government so their legislation, which I assume they put forward with good intent, in the interests of good government in Ontario, might be able to be made better after hearing the concerns people bring forward. It's even possible that they may not have the best legislation — it may not be in the interests of education and good government — and that the concerns people present could persuade them to withdraw it. I'm not hopeful, but potentially that's the effect of having public hearings. That's why we fight so hard to get public hearings.

Last week, one of the witnesses called by the government had clearly been coached by the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education. That he'd been coached was evidenced by the fact that he'd included in his written presentation the notes of the points that Mr Skarica particularly wanted him to emphasize.

Madam Chair, I think that in itself is evidence that these committee hearings are not about hearing from the public, not about hearing concerns, not about examining the legislation as to whether it's good, bad or indifferent in terms of good governance and the future of education in the province. If the government simply intends to go through with it exactly as they have presented, perhaps we should just go to an open forum in a town hall and let people vent, because having the government listen is going to serve no purpose at all.

Interruption.

The Chair: Order, please, Ladies and gentlemen, if we can't have some cooperation, I will be forced to clear the room. I really do not wish to do that, but under the rules of the Legislature I would have to do that. We have a very limited time frame. We want to hear from as many people as possible.

Interruption.

The Chair: Madam, you must cooperate, please. I understand this is an important issue. I want to deal with it at the earliest opportunity. I want to hear everyone out. We will do this immediately after the presentations. Please, in deference to the people who have come here and who want to present, let's hear them out. There will be a discussion of this issue.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Madam Chair: If we do not have a member of the government; of the ministry — that is, the minister or one of the parliamentary assistants — this afternoon, I will be moving that the committee recess until they are available.

The Chair: You are free to make that motion, Mr

Wildman.

Mrs Johns: Chair, I'd like to point out that there are members of the government here. There are five of us sitting here, and there have been seven here this morning.

We are here to hear presentations. They only have 10 minutes. Questions should be held until the time frame in the middle so we can move forward. There are lots of people here. It's important to hear the presenters. I'd like to move forward. Questions you have we will be prepared to answer during the time frame in the middle.

Interjection.

The Chair: Ms Field, I'm sorry, I ask the next presenter to come forward, Barb Willitts.

Ms Field: May I ask my questions again?

The Chair: Your questions are on the record, Ms Field.

Ms Field: No, I have not been told when I will get the answers to my two questions. I am the executive director of FoodShare; in that capacity I've met with Mike Harris and many MPPs. I have had good answers to questions around child nutrition. You have created a process here where Helen Johns or any of the MPPs who are here will not answer my question. You have legislation. I'd like to know, what does it say in the legislation around student nutrition? Second

The Chair: Ms Field, your questions have been

recorded. They are noted.

Ms Field: You have not said you will get back to me tomorrow. You've not told me you'll get back to me next week. You've not told me -

The Chair: We're not in a position to be able to do that

Ms Field: I am not leaving until I get an answer to those two questions.

The Chair: With respect, Ms Field, it is Ms Willitts's turn. I would ask Barb Willitts to come forward.

Ms Fields: Perhaps all of the speakers would feel more comfortable if they did not proceed until we saw what was on the blue sheets.

The Chair: I would like Barb Willitts to come for-

Ms Field: I think we should disband until you give us some information. Give us the blue sheets. Also, find out - a logical question; you're a big government and you've got a lot of researchers — what does it say in the legislation around student nutrition?

The Chair: Ms Field, we will provide that information as soon as the parliamentary assistant comes. I would ask your indulgence in not disrupting the proceedings. If we do not continue with the hearings, people will be disadvantaged. People have come here to present. May I ask you to please leave your seat. Thank you for your cooperation, Ms Field.

## BARBARA WILLITTS

The Chair: Will Ms Willitts please come forward. Thank you. Ms Willitts, you have 10 minutes for your presentation.

Ms Barbara Willitts: Do you know what? I'm going to say exactly what Debbie Field said. I want to know what you know about me. I know a little bit about some of you because I was here last week, but I don't know what's on your sheets. I'm offended. I feel like I'm in the United States of America and you guys are the FBI. This is outrageous. Please, may I know what they say about me? Mrs Johns, would you please read to me what is said about me, if there is anything there about me in specific?

Mrs Johns: There is nothing said about you. All these are are documents that tell us who might be presenting and that kind of question. They ask what questions we might have. There is nothing for you -

Interjections.

The Chair: Order, please.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair, I would like to know why that paper -

The Chair: Excuse me, Mrs McLeod. We're going to have some order.

Interjections.

Mrs Johns: — prepared by the PC caucus.

The Chair: Excuse me, we're going to have some order. Mrs McLeod, you had a point of order?

Mrs McLeod: It's my understanding, Madam Chair, that those were distributed by a member of the Ministry of Education. I think it is appalling enough that the government should be in possession of profiles on anybody presenting who may be in opposition. It is even more appalling that the parliamentary assistant is coaching witnesses called by the government. I'd like some assurance that that's not why he's not present at the committee hearings this morning, and I would like to know whether it was Ministry of Education personnel who did distribute these documents.

Mr Wildman: Madam Chair, I move that the Conservative caucus table the document in question.

The Chair: Debate?

Mrs Johns: I think it's time for us to move forward to hear the people here. It's important for people to be here and to be heard. What's going to happen is that they're not going to be able to be heard.

The Chair: Mrs Johns, in fairness -Mrs Johns: I am debating the motion.

The Chair: All right. It sounded like another motion. Mrs Johns: I would like to move forward to be able to hear the people who are here. At 1:30 we are going to

be moving away from this and moving to the House and

these people deserve to be heard this morning. We're all here to listen to these people. We would like to hear what they have to say. We would like to move forward to hear what individual people have to say. This bill is very important to the government and to the people and to myself, who has children in the education system. We want to hear what you have to say. Let us move forward.

The Chair: Any further debate?

Mr Duncan: If the government is truly interested in hearing what people have to say, extend the hearings and table your enemies list. Let the public see it. It's an absolute scandal that you would not let that document out. The person I witnessed distributing it was the young woman in the front row with the glasses who last week I was given to understand is with the Ministry of Education. If that was prepared by PC caucus, why is a public servant being forced to distribute partisan political material? That would be the other question.

I would say, table the document. If you're afraid to table it, you must be hiding something. It's likely your enemies list, and you ought to be ashamed if that's what

you have

The Chair: Mr Wildman.

**Mr Wildman:** I would remind the committee that I moved a motion last week that the committee request the government to extend the hearings so we could hear more people. If Mrs Johns and her colleagues are so concerned about wanting to hear people, why did they vote against that motion?

I would ask you to vote in favour of this motion and to table the document so we can get on with the hearings.

The Chair: Further debate? All right, I'll call for a vote on the motion. All those in favour?

Mr Wildman: Recorded vote.

#### Aves

Caplan, Duncan, McLeod, Wildman.

**The Chair:** Opposed to the motion? *Interruption*.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen.

Mrs McLeod: I am sorry, Madam Chair; the committee cannot proceed under these circumstances.

The Chair: With respect, Mrs McLeod, we have a motion on the floor and it has to be voted on.

## Navs

Chudleigh, Danford, Froese, Johns, Spina.

**The Chair:** The motion is defeated.

Ladies and gentlemen, there being no quorum, we would normally recess, but the subcommittee had agreed to continue without quorum. Unfortunately, we will have to continue with the presentation in the absence of the opposition. Ms Willitts?

Ms Willitts: Ms Castrilli, I would like to ask to be the first one called when quorum has been resumed because I've spent a lot of time on this and I'm speaking to a

third of the room.

The Chair: Let me repeat for the opposition, you may recall that the subcommittee presented a report that was

adopted by this committee that said that we could continue without a quorum. We now have a quorum, Ms Willitts. Will you continue, please.

Ms Willitts: This isn't scripted. Do you have an idea of why parents are so frustrated? Do you have any idea whatsoever? We have been going through this for over a year now. It's unbelievable. You're treating us like less than children. It's shameful. You are all to be ashamed for how you're behaving. I don't see this in my kid's grade 1 class. It's shameful. Okay, I've used up two minutes, I'm sure, venting.

I'd like to thank you for being allowed to speak here today. Many parents I know would love to be here and watch this and participate in this and they haven't been

able to, so thanks very much.

I'm going to deal with just three issues today that bother me about Bill 104. There are countless issues. There is a lot in the process that bothers me, but I'm only going to deal with three, and those are volunteerism,

funding and guiding principles.

I'm a parent volunteer at my children's school. I'm cochair of the Howard home and school association and I'm on the fund-raising committee; I'm on the staffing committee and I'm a representative to the ward 2 parents' council, a very active group in the Parkdale area. I'm a busy lady. The standard was set by Abby Bushby, who preceded me here today. She did all this work on her own at our school.

I'm just one of 40 people on our home and school executive. We are a very fortunate school. We all work very hard for our kids. We do it on our various committees and we try to create a better school environment for our children. It's called enlightened self-interest. It's good for our kids; it's good for our communities.

We've just recently had to start a food bank at our school because we knew that the classmates of some of our children were coming to school hungry — they didn't have lunch — or that the parents went hungry when the cheque ran out before the end of the month. We wanted a better environment for our kids, so we started the food bank

We function very well. However, no one I have spoken to in my school or in my community is interested in spending any more time in the school. They're in the classrooms on a regular basis. They pitch in whenever we put out the call. However, we feel we have adequate input right now at Howard school, that problems can be resolved through our committees or in consultation with our principal and that we have more than enough responsibility. We are not interested in doing any more.

This government wants to increase the amount of parent involvement in the school system, and that's fine. We don't need it. I understand that other schools may and that's fine. Work with those schools; assist them to develop an active parent body. Forty parents involved in a home and school association on a regular basis doesn't happen overnight. They have to be nurtured. Volunteerism needs to be encouraged but it cannot be legislated.

We have an articulate, energetic and active trustee who works on our behalf and who is always available at some point during her day to get back to us to respond to questions or to guide us. She is worth every penny of the

full-time salary she receives. You have to pay for work and you have to pay a fair amount for that work, especially when that person is expected to respond to parents' requests in a timely fashion, expected to be involved with each school in the ward and know how each of those schools functions, and act as an advocate for the students and the parents in the ward.

Some of the other schools in ward 2 — it encompasses Parkdale — do not have the active parent body we have at Howard. They require more assistance from the trustee. They require more guidance than we do. Parents there have to work full-time outside of the home. They don't have the energy or the desire to sit on a committee after work, especially if there are a couple of children who require assistance with their homework at home.

Those schools also have a much higher percentage of children who come from immigrant families, single-parent families, families who are doing everything they can to keep their heads above water, parents who are trying to adapt and survive in this new country. They have enough on their plates. They don't need anything else. They're having to learn the language and earn enough money to feed and clothe themselves. They don't have the time to help and their children are doing all they can in a foreign environment.

Our current system in Toronto supports those families and those children. They get counselling to aid in the transition from their old life to the new one. They get ESL courses to help them learn English and to fit into their community so that their future will be as bright as the future of the kids who were born here. They get additional funding in their inner-city schools, and they should get it; they need it. We need for them to get it because we all live in the same neighbourhood, and if those kids are disadvantaged, my family will be affected by that sooner rather than later. We need to bring everyone up to the highest level rather than meet them on the way to the bottom.

That's another thing that makes me so angry about what this government is up to. Funding for our inner-city schools, for our disadvantaged students and for the schools in rural areas is up in the air, and I don't believe that the government doesn't know what those funding levels should be or what you plan to provide in the future. I think we're going to find out after our trustees and our boards are gone and no longer able to advise us.

Parents I speak with on a daily basis are as frustrated and angry as I am that they don't know what the base amount is that the government will fund for their children's education, what the extras are going to cost and whether or not their kids are going to get those extras. This is unbelievable. You must know what your funding levels are, and if you don't, you should have done your homework and you shouldn't come to us, the public, until you know and you can tell us. It's irresponsible to come to us and light fires without having answers.

The needs of the children in the various school boards in this province are different and they require different approaches and different funding, but they require adequate funding none the less. I'm not happy that the schools of Huron county, Bruce county or wherever are not receiving an adequate amount to provide the services

they need for their students. I think that's unacceptable and that those schools should be supported fully.

However, in supporting those schools, our public schools in the city shouldn't be decimated. In the same way that we wish to help our less fortunate schools here in the city, we should do the same for those in the province, not by meeting them halfway on the way to the bottom but by helping them to join us up here. Efficiencies should be made in the education system. I heartily encourage that. But at the end of the day, we parents must know that our tax dollars are going towards our children's education and not to a tax break.

Mr Snobelen gave an assurance to 30 parents at Annette school in January that the money obtained by achieving efficiencies in the system would be plowed back into education and no money would be taken from the system, that the total envelope of spending, \$13.7-odd billion, would not be reduced. In fact, he said that if more was needed, he would put it in. I received that assurance from him that night. Mr Derwyn Shea, my MPP, and a roomful of parents heard it. I expect Mr Snobelen to stand behind his word.

Finally, the issue of guiding principles: I've put my thoughts on them at the end of this presentation because I have a sense that is what the government has done as well. I just want to highlight how totally backward that is

It's a vision thing, and I don't believe that the government has one yet. Mr Snobelen and Mr Shea both admitted that they're working on this, that they're consulting and trying to get a handle on what's important. I'd say it's backward to start at that point when you've already decided to do something and you go forward without already having made a first pass at deciding what's to be accomplished and why without having some goals established based on sound principles.

Our school sent our MPP and Mr Snobelen a copy of the Essential Schools document. It spells out what we as parents feel to be essential for our children's education. I don't have a sense that anyone in the government has spent much time reading that document yet.

I was here last week when Mr Moll presented the bill of rights for children in Toronto schools. We in our school fully support that bill of rights, and I expect my elected representatives to do the same.

Finally, I understand there's a new bill, Bill 110, the School Class Sizes Act. It apparently has gone to second reading. Both of these pieces of information are worthy. If the government wants to improve education in the province, I can't think of a better place to start than to support this bill wholeheartedly and make sure Mr Moll's bill of rights for children is somehow brought into Bill 104. We parents are in our children's classrooms on a daily basis and we know what education is like when there are 29 or 31 children in a senior kindergarten or grade 1 class. It's mayhem, it's hellish and it's exhausting, not just for the teacher but for the parents who are in there and for the kids who have to endure six hours of that.

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I have a slew of other difficulties with this legislation, one of which being the absurd classification of in-class and out-of-classroom expenditures. That's just one of the many, but I don't have the time to deal with them and I leave that to other parents. I can tell you that my colleagues at our home and school are watching and that parents are watching and that we're not afraid of change, that we embrace change as long as it's done thoughtfully, carefully and with the objective of improving our education system and not pillaging it. Thank you.

The Chair: You've used up all your time. Thank you

very much for being here.

Mr Wildman: Chair, since Mr Skarica has arrived, is it now possible for me to get answers to the questions I raised?

The Chair: I think the two questions you raised have been noted. I don't know whether Mr Skarica has been given those questions. If you'd like to repeat them again.

you may.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): I have them. First of all, let me apologize for not being here. My scheduler phoned me on Friday afternoon saying that I didn't have to be here this morning. It was a mistake. I apologize to all concerned. I undertake to read Hansard. Anybody on this side and that side knows I've never missed a hearing before. I scheduled a press conference instead at 9 this morning, otherwise I would have been here earlier, and I'm very apologetic. I'm sorry, it will not happen again.

Mr Wildman: I specifically asked that an explanation be provided as to why the government feels they have to establish a commission with extraordinary powers that are not appealable even to a court to achieve the amalgamation of boards at this time under Bill 104, when in 1968 there was a significantly larger amalgamation of boards carried out in Ontario by a previous Conservative government and no such commission and no such extraordinary powers were established at that time. I wanted to know

the reason for the difference.

Mr Skarica: I tried to get you that explanation the other day, but I undertake to do further research and provide you with an answer as best I can.

Mr Wildman: The other question was about what work has been done on a nutrition program for the

schools and how that relates to Bill 104.

Mr Skarica: Again, I don't have that information with me, but I'll do my best to obtain it.

Mr Wildman: The other question I had was whether or not the blue paper would be tabled.

The Chair: We had a motion with respect to that and it was defeated, but if Mr Skarica wants to add something

Mr Skarica: Yes. The blue papers have been at all the other committee hearings, Mr Wildman, and they're basically just a brief description, a profile of the presenters. There's nothing contentious here, just some

suggested questions. Interruption

The Chair: Please let Mr Skarica finish.

Mr Skarica: There's nothing like that at all. I can read one out just random:

"Colleen Morris."

"Ms Colleen Morris has requested to make a presentation at the Bill 104 hearings.

"Position: Not stated."

Then there's a question: "If Bill 104 is passed, what opportunities do you feel exist for boards to achieve efficiencies while continuing to provide quality education in your community?"

There's nothing scandalous, nothing improper. I just

picked that one out at random.

Mr Wildman: If that's the case, I don't know why it wouldn't be tabled.

Mr Skarica: Because it's not normally done on any committee hearing, to my knowledge.

The Chair: There has been a motion and it was defeated

Mr Duncan: Who prepared the blue sheets?

Mr Skarica: My understanding is that they're prepared by officials within the Ministry of Education.

Mr Duncan: Ms Johns indicated they were prepared

by your caucus services.

Mr Skarica: That's not my information, but again I can make further inquiries. That's to the best of my

knowledge.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order then, Madam Chair: Would it not be appropriate that documentation prepared by the ministry with respect to these hearings ought to be made available to the official opposition and the third party as well as the government members?

Mr Wildman: It's not a partisan document.

Mr Duncan: It's not a partisan document.

The Chair: I appreciate that, Mr Duncan. You have a point of order with respect to that.

Mr Skarica: I understand it has already been voted on, and it's not the normal procedure. These documents were provided to us on all the other committee hearings we've had and not provided to the opposition, and my under-

standing is that it's the normal procedure. Mr Duncan: On my point of order, I would have thought that such a document would be part of the compendium to the bill and part of the documentation that's been distributed to us in order to facilitate complete and full debate on the issues that are before us. I wonder why the government would withhold certain information while at the same time providing other information. Would it not be in the interests of fair and full hearings to have that information, which you have described as innocuous, being distributed, in the interest that we all have the same access to the information you're using to further enhance debate?

Mrs McLeod: I can't emphasize enough my belief that what is happening here, although it might not seem offensive to Mr Skarica, is offensive to the entire way in which this committee is operating and to the very intent of the committee hearing. It is the purpose of this committee to review a piece of legislation that has huge consequences for education in this province. It is not the function of this committee to have the government well briefed by the Ministry of Education using Ministry of Education resources on how to challenge those who want to bring their concerns forward. I believe that this is a totally inappropriate use of the resources of a ministry. As well, it is a total abuse of the role of this committee.

Mr Wildman: With respect -

The Chair: I will allow one final point, Mr Wildman. We really have to move on.

Mr Wildman: The suggestion that this is normal procedure and that it has been in the past does not conform with my experience, and I've been around here a little while, 22 years in the House. If it is normal procedure and there's nothing of concern or controversy in the document, then I fail to understand why it would not be tabled and provided to not only the opposition but to all the members of the public. Surely it's in the interests of everyone to have all the information and as much information as possible.

The Chair: Thank you all for your comments. We did have a motion on the subject and the motion was defeated. It remains, however, to determine whether this was documentation prepared by the ministry with ministry funds. In that event, even though the motion may have been defeated, I would urge the government to reconsider and table that information for everyone here.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Speaker, on a further point of order: I'm prepared, since the government was not prepared to, to table what we have. It is a document that was acquired at a previous open forum. I don't know whether or not it is identical to the profiles the government has now, since it deals with other presenters who are not presenting today. The government may have updated profiles, but I would like this tabled for all members of the committee.

The Chair: Very well, we will have that distributed to members of the committee.

Mr Wildman: I don't have any profile.

The Chair: If I may, I'd like to continue, in the interests of those who have been waiting for some time to appear.

#### **EVE PETERSEN**

The Chair: Ms Petersen, thank you for your understanding. You have 10 minutes.

Mrs Eve Petersen: My name is Eve Petersen and I'm here today as a home-educating parent. I am here with three other parents, Donna, Colleen and Kelly. Kelly's husband was here briefly with our children outside, but because we're so behind time, he's had to leave and the children have joined him.

To give you my profile, I live in Scarborough and I am a professional librarian with a master's degree in library science from the University of British Columbia. I am here to speak in support, generally, of the purpose of Bill 104 and, Ms McLeod, I have not been coached by anyone.

After many years of working in college, university and public libraries and a number of years volunteering in the libraries at the public schools that my two sons used to attend, I, together with my husband, have chosen to educate our children at home.

The Ontario Federation of Teaching Parents, which I belong to, knows of approximately 3,000 families in Ontario who have chosen home-based education or, as it is popularly known, home schooling. As most of us have more than one child and many are large, child-oriented families, we're probably talking about 10,000 children. I have a newspaper clipping here about a home-educating family with 13 children. The eldest has just won a scholarship to study engineering at Princeton University.

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With regard to Bill 104, first, I'd like to briefly comment on the reduction in the number of school boards. When my husband and I first enrolled our children in the Toronto school board and more recently in the adjacent Scarborough school board, we observed large, duplicated bureaucracies that were largely irrelevant to our sons' experiences in the classroom. Now that our family's education is home-based; the school board bureaucracies are completely irrelevant to us.

Second, I'd like to endorse the establishment of an Education Improvement Commission. In particular, I welcome the section in the bill which states that the commission shall research and make recommendations to the minister on the feasibility of increasing parent

involvement in education governance.

The Ontario Federation of Teaching Parents is certainly a group of involved parents. We are a voluntary organization of families who have chosen home-based education. We and our children are a keen, enthusiastic, dedicated group working directly to improve the education that the children receive.

I urge the committee members present today and the incoming Education Improvement Commission to feel free to call any of us to find out why home-based education is so effective and growing in popularity.

The executive members of the Ontario Federation of Teaching Parents are all willing to consult with you and the commissioners. The secretary, Kelly Green, is here today.

I personally welcome an improved Ministry of Education that is more informed and knowledgeable about home-based education. I did not find the Ministry of Education well informed when I first telephoned the ministry a year ago to inquire about removing my children from public school. But I did get good information from my cousin-in-law in British Columbia, who is home-educating her five children.

I recently heard an interview on CBC Radio with a woman from British Columbia. She and her husband had taken their three children out of public school for six years to sail around the world. The BC Ministry of Education had provided them with a complete set of curriculum materials. When I phoned the ministry, I was told there was no such a program available from the Ministry of Education. I'm not sure if that was accurate or not, but certainly we did subsequently get excellent home-based education materials from other sources.

I welcome any questions that the members present of this committee have about home-based education, and I've distributed one page about the Ontario Federation of Teaching Parents that I urge you to read.

Mr Wildman: Thank you for your presentation. Have you received curriculum materials from the Ministry of Education and Training in Ontario now?

Mrs Petersen: No. I find I don't need them because I'm using the curriculum that I got from other parents.

**Mr Wildman:** The Ministry of Education and Training in Ontario has only four people for developing curriculum for the whole province, for all the students in the province, mainly because that has been done, I suppose improperly, but it has mainly been done by boards up to

now, in recent years. They just don't have the staff to do the work. Perhaps they should and that's something we should be looking at.

Mrs Petersen: It would certainly be more efficient than having each individual board make up their own policy.

**Mr Wildman:** They do guidelines. The ministry does guidelines but the boards actually develop the curriculum

and the teaching materials.

Mrs Petersen: When I asked our board for a recommendation for, say, a math textbook, they said, "Get any one."

Mr Wildman: The other question I have is since you're a librarian, I'm wondering if you might comment on the view that has been put forward by the government that libraries are not part of students' classroom education. Would you agree with that?

Mrs Petersen: It depends. At the school my children attended, there was not a professional librarian in charge of the library, and I thought that detracted from the education they received because the children were reading sort of Goosebumps type books. I did object to the teacher who was in charge because I don't think this was a good way to spend taxpayers' money.

But I do see some duplication with the schools because the school libraries are only there for eight months of the year and there's a perfectly good public library in the same block. I think there could be better utilization of public library resources and it depends on how the money

public library resources and it depends on how the money is used. Our board in Scarborough said they spend \$7,000 per student per year. There were 30 students in my son's grade 3 class. Thirty times \$7,000 is \$200,000, and that's not counting the teacher and the teaching assistant.

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): Thank you for your presentation this morning. You mentioned in your comments the concerns you had with respect to efficiency and duplication within the Scarborough board experience. Recognizing the comments you made to Mr Wildman about opportunities for greater utilization of school libraries, what other observations have you made with respect to opportunities for increased efficiencies or areas of duplication that have caused you enough concern to remove your child from the public school system?

Mrs Petersen: I'd like to see fewer students per teacher in the classroom, but at the same time I go out to the Scarborough school board and there's a huge three-storey building filled with education bureaucrats. When we lived in Toronto, there was the same thing in Toronto. I haven't looked at it line by line, but it seems to me that there must be. Then if you go out to boards farther out, everywhere you go there's another school board and it doesn't always have anything to do with what's happening in the classroom. As I said, now that our children are home it has no relevance to us.

Mr Duncan: I just wonder if the government is asking the prepared questions that they have made up for them or if they're asking questions resulting from the presenta-

tions by the delegations.

**Mr Smith:** I'm asking questions from the submission. **Mr Duncan:** Oh, okay. So you're ignoring these questions that have been prepared for you.

The Chair: Was that your question?

Mr Duncan: Yes.

Mrs McLeod: I'd like to bring the questions to Bill 104 specifically and try to get a sense of how Bill 104 might affect the alternatives of home schooling as you've experienced them under the current education system. I need to just get a little bit more of a sense of that.

I assume you would agree that there would be a concern to keep some measure of control. I appreciate the fact that you have found it frustrating that there isn't a better understanding by either the province or school boards as to the role of alternative schools and home schooling, but that you still needed some measure of control: There has to be a standard in terms of curriculum, there has to be some supervision by the Ministry of Education of the home schooling and there has to be some concern about whether the children are going to get an adequate education through the home-schooling process.

I'm wondering if school boards become as huge as they will be under this bill, if they disappear altogether, which is certainly a decided possibility as a result of this bill — and I also have to put it in the context that there are virtually no regional offices of the Ministry of Education left — wouldn't it be very difficult for homeschooling parents to try to deal directly with the Queen's Park-based Ministry of Education to get their concerns and essentially their ability to provide home schooling addressed?

Mrs Petersen: Because of the broad range of philosophies that home school has come from and because of the broad range of different experiences they get dealing with different school boards, I think many of us would prefer to deal directly with ministry policy so we know what we're dealing with province-wide.

Mrs McLeod: I come from northern Ontario so it's a bit difficult for parents in my part of the province to deal directly with the Ministry of Education in Queen's Park or for me to feel comfortable that children in my area could possibly be adequately supervised by a very reduced ministry working out of Queen's Park. I guess I'm concerned about what happens to the children if parents really can't provide adequate home schooling.

Mrs Petersen: We're probably more concerned about public schools that are not providing adequate education for children, and that's sometimes why parents pull their children out of the school. I have a cousin who homeschools up in Marathon in the far north of Ontario and to her, the local school board is irrelevant to their homebased education. She gets her curriculum materials from a Christian home-schooling supply company and for many of us, as I said, the school boards have no role to play.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs Petersen, for coming here with your group and thank you, particularly,

to the children for coming today.

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# TAM GOOSSEN

The Chair: Could I ask Tam Goossen to come forward. Thank you very much for coming.

Ms Tam Goossen: Ladies and gentlemen, that was certainly very entertaining this morning. I'm glad I came.

First of all, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak here in front of you about Bill 104. I would like to begin by telling you a little bit about myself, to add to

the confidential profile that you have of me.

I have been an elected representative on the Toronto Board of Education for close to nine years. Before becoming a trustee, I was an active mother in my children's school — so you can see trustees are just ordinary people - getting my feet wet, so to speak, in school politics, like many of our parents are doing right now. The issue at the time was the introduction of the heritage languages program and that was at the time when it was being introduced in various Toronto schools and hearings were held in individual schools. That's how all the parents got into the act, debating about the pros and cons of the issue.

Since arriving in Toronto in 1970 as an immigrant, I have been living at pretty much the same spot in downtown Toronto, at College and Bathurst, first as a university student and then as a mother with two children attending our local public school. As I became more involved with the school. I also became very much aware of the obstacles confronting immigrant parents with little or no knowledge of why or how their children were being taught the way they were. They felt frustrated that they couldn't really communicate with their children's teachers because they only spoke Chinese or Portuguese.

Indeed, one parent commented to me that he felt that he totally lost control of his son when he went into the school system. Why? Because as the son learned more English, his ability to speak Chinese diminished. Moreover, as he became more Canadianized, he seemed further alienated from his own home environment and the school didn't seem to be able to do much to help. One of the things that motivated me to run for trustee was to help

immigrant parents like him.

I faced the voters three times, and after that experience I can assure you — they were all very much hotly contested elections, not just sleepy-time cakewalks like you read in the media - I can be confident in saying that I have been able to help. The Toronto board has a good system in place to help immigrant parents, like the Chinese gentleman I talked about, feel welcomed and valued in our schools.

Not only that, as you have heard from our parents before, all our parents have a final say in interviews to hire principals and vice-principals for their own schools. As a major public institution, particularly in this province, we have very good employment and promotion policies. Without these policies, our women or visible minority educators would not have had the chance to work side by side with their white male colleagues in positions of responsibility. You should see the change in the administrators in our system. It's just marvellous to see right now.

As the city of Toronto has welcomed immigrants from all parts of the globe for over 100 years, the Toronto Board of Education has developed many good community-based programs to help new Canadians settle and flourish in this new environment. These include ESL programs; international, formerly known as heritage, languages programs; parenting centres; school-based child

care centres; and inner-city support programs, just to name a few. Without these, many of our immigrant families, who have contributed so much towards the economic growth and wellbeing of this city, would have

been largely alienated from our schools.

I wish we trustees could claim all the credit for these good initiatives at the Toronto board. In truth, however, we have been building on the good work done by a lot of our predecessors who considered policies on public education vitally important in the building of a just and democratic society. They took the job of trustee very seriously — as an aside, I'm sorry to hear that maybe Mr Harris had a bad experience as a trustee, but that certainly is not the experience at the Toronto board. They challenged the administration every way they could. They listened to the various communities very carefully and painstakingly put in place policies and practices that were of lasting significance. I am very proud to be part of that tradition and to have been able to make my own mark on

What does Bill 104 mean to me? As a trustee, I'm frankly very puzzled by the minister's statement that he wants to restore trustees to their traditional role. What tradition is he referring to? Back when Ontario was made up of mainly rural communities where students were taught by one teacher in a one-room school house? Why then propose a mega-size school board with 300,000 students from the most diverse backgrounds imaginable? How can he even suggest that an elected trustee, accountable to over 100,000 citizens, should be paid \$5,000, but the people appointed by him, and answerable only to him, to oversee the so-called Education Improvement Commission should be paid \$90,000 each? Please explain to me what kind of democracy that is.

After working so intimately with the various communities in the city and the board bureaucracy for so long, I know for a fact that the success of these Toronto programs and policies has not come easily. Rather it is the result of the dynamic interplay of political will and administrative knowledge. In the minister's proposed scenario under Bill 104, however, every school will have to fight for its survival in a monolithic mega-board bureaucracy where political opposition has been silenced. I fear for all students and their families, especially those who are not English-speaking, who are recent immigrants

or refugees and, frankly, who are poor.

My colleague Mr David Moll was here last week urging you to support a bill of rights guaranteeing a basic minimum standard for the Toronto system. David and I have had our share of differences over the years on many, many issues, but I have always respected his commitment to public education and his sense of fair play. I absolutely agree with him when he said, "Our city has avoided the problems of large American cities for one main reason: strong neighbourhoods and strong neighbourhood schools."

A system that has allowed people like Mr Moll, a long-time Tory member from the east end of the city, and myself, an immigrant from Hong Kong and an NDPer living downtown right in the middle of Kensington Market, to work together for the good of all our varied and diverse communities can't be that bad. I therefore

join Mr Moll in urging you to repeal Bill 104, or at least delay it until the minister can give our parents and students a straightforward answer about the future of Toronto schools. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Goossen.

Interruption.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, please, we must have some order.

Mr Skarica: Ms Goossen, you indicated that you felt that it was appropriate to have a minimum bill of rights for students in Toronto. Why wouldn't you think that should apply throughout the province?

Mr Wildman: In your absence, I suggested we amend

the bill to include it for everybody.

Ms Goossen: I think it's absolutely true. Those are very good programs. I don't know if you have a copy of Mr Moll's deputation because he listed all the things in there and I think those are programs that could benefit all students in Ontario — absolutely.

Mr Skarica: Your position then is if there was going to be a bill of rights, it should apply to all the students of Ontario as opposed to Toronto or a section of the prov-

ince. Is that fair to say?

Ms Goossen: No, no. I wouldn't say that you ram things down people's throats and force them to accept particular programs, but these are the — what we tried to do in that bill of rights is have an essential good school as developed by our parents, and if the individual communities would like to look at that as a reference, they can certainly do that. I couldn't recommend it as a mandatory essential school program for everybody. I wouldn't suggest that.

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Mrs McLeod: Just as a point of clarification, could I ask the parliamentary assistant if he was referring to — did I hear a "minimal" bill of rights?

Mr Skarica: No. I just asked her if she felt the bill of

rights should apply -

Mrs McLeod: Yes, but I thought I heard you say a "minimum" bill of rights and I just hope that if we could ever get around to talking about a bill of rights for children, we would be talking about something much more than a minimum.

I wanted to just pursue your sense that after Bill 104, every school will have to fight for its survival. Do you feel that those school boards will essentially disappear, become unworkable, exist in name only, and that's why essentially you'll have one school versus another? Is that your concern?

Ms Goossen: That's my absolute fear, because you can see the way it's set up now, it's almost like — as I said, you are setting up a huge, remote, centralized structure and then you have parents at each school trying to fight for their own school. There's nothing really in between. The kind of individual board structures that we have now

will disappear.

One of the reasons why parents come out to the school meetings, first of all, is really to fight for their own kids, and if they have time they might think about other kids in the school. I mean, it's legitimate for parents to do so, and when you have such a remote bureaucracy out there, what choice do they have if they don't fight for their own

kids and individual schools? Nothing. So it just really makes that situation worse and the conflict will be, I think, very difficult to handle. I'd hate to be the principal of that school.

Mr Wildman: Ms Goossen, as you may know, I have some particular interest in the experience of your community because I have a little girl who is from Yangzhou, China, near Nanjing, and she's about to celebrate her third birthday. I'm hoping next year that she'll be going to a junior kindergarten, but I'm afraid she may not be able to.

In particular, your concern about the role of trustees and Mr Snobelen's comments: Mr Snobelen I think said — I'm paraphrasing, but I'm very close to what he said — "The trustees should return to be the guardians of quality education, not the managers of the schools." Does that help you any in understanding what he wants for trustees?

Ms Goossen: No. We have a good quality of education. I'd never consider myself a manager of the school, not at all

**Mr Wildman:** He seems to think because you have a full-time position that you are hands-on managers in running the schools for which you are responsible as a trustee. Is that an accurate assessment of the role of a trustee for the Toronto board?

Ms Goossen: No, not at all. That's not my experience, and I've been a trustee for close to nine years.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms Goossen. There's never enough time for these presentations.

# **GORDON FLETT**

The Chair: Could I ask Gordon Flett to come forward. Thank you very much, Dr Flett, for being with us. You have 10 minutes.

**Dr Gordon Flett:** Thank you for the opportunity to speak before the committee. My name is Gordon Flett. I am a psychology professor at York University and I'm also the chair of the accommodation committee at Middlebury Public School in Mississauga. I'm going to focus on Bill 104 in terms of its negative implications for school construction and how it has already led to great unhappiness in our community.

As a social scientist, I agree with the general principle that there should be equity throughout the province in terms of the amount of funding per student. However, I feel that this bill appears to define the concept of equity in a very narrow manner. There is no indication in Bill 104 that this government is at all concerned about equity of opportunity in terms of equitable access to appropriate school facilities. If anything, Bill 104 has already made a bad situation with respect to accommodation even worse.

Recall that last March the government imposed a one-year moratorium on school construction. The moratorium was lifted last month, in theory at least. Unfortunately, the introduction of Bill 104 in effect reinstated the moratorium. Why?

Bill 104 stipulates that expenditures of \$50,000 or more must be approved by the EIC, the Education Improvement Commission. School boards can't purchase

property unless they have the EIC's permission, but permission is impossible to obtain because the EIC does not exist at present. School boards throughout this province want to proceed with the planning and construction of new schools, but they cannot. Construction companies throughout this province want to get on with their work, but they cannot. And unemployed construction workers must be wondering why they can't get a job when the government has announced \$650 million worth of new schools.

Real architects are on hold while the architect of educational reform, Mr Snobelen, creates his crisis. Recently, when asked by Mr Wildman about the school construction crisis that still exists, Mr Snobelen characterized the government's record on school construction as "exemplary." Unfortunately, nothing can be farther from the truth. Instead of meeting the needs of students, the current government has implemented a moratorium and appears to have done everything possible to slow down the construction of schools through the provisions outlined in Bill 104.

I would like to now focus on our specific situation at Middlebury to illustrate the dangers inherent in Bill 104. Middlebury was built for 500 students four years ago and it currently has 700 students and 10 portables. Note that Middlebury is the only elementary school in central Erin Mills, which is one of the fastest growing communities in Ontario and in Canada. There are no separate schools in our community, and there is no senior public school. Still, the new houses keep coming and coming. If no new school is built, it is estimated that Middlebury will have 1,062 students by 1999 and approximately 25 portables.

Note that the school we need is not a moratorium project. In fact, the school we need in our area has never been allocated money by the Ministry of Education and Training. Why? Our school has never been approved because the Harris government has never issued a call for new school projects. They have simply unfrozen projects and then refrozen those projects approved by the former NDP government.

A solution to our problem was provided last December, but it now appears to have been taken away. On December 17, the Peel board trustees voted to build our school. They are willing to build the school with the board's own funds if necessary, in recognition of the problem. By taking this step, our trustees recognized their duty to provide appropriate accommodation as outlined in the Education Act. I've actually appended a letter to the back written by the education minister. It outlines their duties and it's in the appendix for you.

The new school that we require would alleviate overcrowding at Middlebury and allow our senior students to stay in our community. However, all work on our new school has now been stopped because of the retroactive clause in Bill 104. Right now we have no school, and all we are left with are a lot of questions. These questions include the following:

First, will the EIC give permission for our new school? If so, when? Or will they deny permission and make us wait for the new funding model for school construction that is supposed to come in the spring? Note that every day that goes by makes it less likely that our new school

will be available in September 1998, which was the original goal of the Peel board.

Second, how can proposed legislation be made retroactive and suspend current school board decisions? These decisions have been made in our children's best interests by our democratically elected officials. What about the current rights of our children as outlined in the existing Education Act? Our trustees seem to be the only people who have been sticking up for our kids, and their powers have been usurped by Bill 104. Does this mean that the rights of our children are also in abeyance?

Finally, perhaps the biggest question is, when will our own MPP, Education Minister John Snobelen, start representing the best interests of his own constituents? I have written to Mr Snobelen and asked him to intervene in this situation, and I've appended that letter and related materials as well. To my knowledge, my written request has gone unanswered, as has our request for a meeting. Mr Snobelen has either ignored or refused all of our requests for a meeting with him over the past year, about five or six in total. I can only surmise that our MPP is avoiding us because he does not want to have to explain why he implemented a school construction moratorium after promising us 13 months ago that this would never happen because at the time he said, "It would be political suicide in my riding."

I derive no comfort from the fact that our situation is not unique, as indicated in today's Toronto Star article titled "Pending Laws Make Schools Afraid to Start New Buildings." I have been in contact with Linda Sinclair, who is the parent leading the fight for a school to replace the Nottawa school in Collingwood. She has informed me that her MPP, Jim Wilson, has also asked Mr Snobelen to intervene on their behalf, but no meaningful solution has been provided. I guess when a school is 91 years old and has needed to be replaced for several years and is in fact falling apart, as is the case with the Nottawa school, it's okay to let the students wait a little bit longer.

Where does this leave us? I've heard a lot of platitudes and promises from this government, but I've seen no real solutions. This government says things like, "We will help Ontario students take their place at the head of the class." If you want us to believe that you are sincerely trying to improve the education system, then demonstrate this. Here are some basic things you can do:

First, put in an amendment or reach an all-party agreement that will allow our school and all the other schools to go forward. Eliminate the retroactive clause of Bill 104 and eliminate or modify the clause that prohibits purchases of \$50,000 or more.

Second, recognize that the costs of accommodation are part of the classroom. Acknowledge the province's responsibility in ensuring that students have equitable access to appropriate school facilities and that failure to address this infringes on their right to a quality education.

Finally, do not offload school construction and associated costs to municipalities. At least two of the government members, Mr O'Toole and Mr Snobelen, have told me personally that this government plans to get out of the school construction business as part of their master plan. If the province wants to control education, then surely it must assume the responsibility for school accommoda-

tion, since experts agree that the quality of a school's program is directly affected by the learning environment that is provided.

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The bottom line here is that this is not about partisan politics; this is about the education and welfare of our children. Parents throughout this province will simply not tolerate any mistreatment of their children: Do not underestimate the resolve of parents. Already we have seen province-wide protests by parents. These protests are unprecedented in the history of this province and they may be just the beginning.

Most members of this committee are parents, so I know you understand how important education is and just how far parents are willing to go on behalf of their children. If you do not address the school construction problem and it turns out that Bill 104 is simply a smoke-screen for more cuts, then the voice of parents will certainly be heard, if not now, then at election time. Given that there are over two million students in this province, I suspect that the noise created by their parents will be deafening and unforgettable. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr Flett. You've used up your time and we thank you very much for being

with us today.

Mrs McLeod: A short 10 minutes. The Chair: Yes. It flies by, I'm afraid.

**Dr Flett:** The documents speak for themselves, I think. You will see the attachments there.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

#### DAVID HOGG

The Chair: I would call David Hogg. You have 10

minutes. Mr Hogg.

**Mr David Hogg:** I regret that I'm 55 minutes late. I had my time to use as well, so I would appreciate that the committee in future will consider our needs as well as their own.

My name is Dave Hogg, a trustee with the Metropolitan Separate School Board and actively engaged in the education reform movement which supports quality teaching and quality learning for all Ontario students to their maximum capacity: no short change for any.

I was accepted as an individual to make this presentation. Since registering, I have listened to the directors of the Organization for Quality Education, OQE, and spoken to one of the co-chairs of the Coalition for Education Reform, CER. There is general support in both these organizations for the direction taken in Bill 104. There is particular support for significant administrative reduction to achieve an increase of funding in the classrooms. Any move to free teachers from administrative shackles would be viewed positively.

The parents and teachers in both organizations would dearly like to see teachers able to freely exercise their professionalism in delivering quality teaching and promoting quality learning in their classrooms. For too long, teachers have been terrorized — I do not think the word is too strong — into toeing the ideological line: child-centred learning, as if good teachers did not always have this focus, where pupils — six years old in one MSSB document — are responsible for their own learning and

teachers become facilitators, whatever that might mean to a six-year-old; whole language — more of this later; a grossly deficient spiral curriculum from which students were supposed to learn math but did not, etc. I could go on for a long time, but will spare you of some of it.

In July 1994, a small group went to the Ministry of Education to challenge Circular 14, the ministry document which defined acceptable texts. The ministry's self-proclaimed experts claimed a balanced approach to reading was supported in Circular 14, whole language "with some phonics." A teacher in the group had thought to take the texts in and challenged the expert to find the phonics. To my observation, he failed. It would be damned funny if the consequences for Ontario's students were not so disastrous. You will know that the Globe and Mail reported last week definitive research which confirmed that pure phonics is the most effective method of teaching learning to read, something education reformers have known for many years.

I have gone into this detail to impress on you the woeful effect strong administrations replete with consultants can have on Ontario's education. The offset to the trustee-school board system, which has neither protected the quality of education nor the public purse, is strong school councils, a direction we hope you will take. We have all heard the dire predictions that strong school councils will be taken over by special interest groups, and

that of course will be disastrous.

Can I take you back to my earlier remarks about child-centred learning, about whole language and about spiral math curriculum etc? The whole system has been labouring under pedagogical dictatorship this last many years. So what if some schools do succumb to special interest groups? Perhaps some of these special interest groups will be interested in special learning and we will have at least a few more decent schools in the province.

On a personal note, I spent many hours yesterday going through the official Roman Catholic church documents reading about the rights, duties and responsibilities of parents. I would like to suggest you would be hard put to find stronger advocacy anywhere for the move to parent-powered school councils respecting denominational rights. Please allow me the luxury of two quotes. The first is from a Vatican II document,

Gravissimum educationis:

"3. Since parents have conferred life on their children, they have a most solemn obligation to educate their offspring. Hence, parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children. Their role as educators is so decisive that scarcely anything can compensate for their failure in it. For it devolves on parents to create a family atmosphere so animated with love and reverence for God and men that a well-rounded personal and social development will be fostered among the children. Hence, the family is the first school of those social virtues which every society needs."

The second is from the current Pope's 1981 document The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World,

Familiaris Consortio:

"The right and duty of parents to give education is essential, since it is connected with the transmission of human life; it is original and primary with the regard to the educational role of others, on account of the loving relationship between parents and children; and it is irreplaceable and inalienable, and therefore incapable of being entirely delegated to others or usurped by others."

That is pretty strong language for those administrators in the education system who disparage parents and shunt parents aside because these administrators consider themselves "experts." Humility might suggest to these experts that there could be some pretty smart people — parents — who are employed outside the educational system.

To fully inform school councils, you will need to revert to warts-and-all results from quality tests to each council. I am far from sure that is current practice.

After supporting the move to fewer school boards, fewer trustees and far less administration, for follow-up legislation I would recommend that per pupil funding is essential and that it should be directed in the major part to the schools. Some top level school board financial and facility/fabric expertise could be beneficial with some large school/small school financial balancing, but that is all.

I am open for questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Hogg. We have about five minutes. We begin with the official opposition.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much, Mr Hogg. I want to get a sense of your feeling about the consequences of Bill 104 over the longer term. Do you see the role of school trustee as having any particular relevance or meaning under Bill 104, given the fact that there is no funding flexibility, with 100% control of educational funding as the companion piece to this bill?

Mr Hogg: I see a much diminished role and a different role, a role with a different focus. Unfortunately, the trustees have become communicators. They convey messages from the community to the administration, get some sort of resolution and carry it back again. That makes them pretty high-priced messengers, and I don't think that's where their function lies. I think the trustees have misread their function. They should be acting as a board of directors. The move, which was an NDP initiative, to school councils is certainly a move in the right direction so that the decisions that need to be made will be made where they should be made, in the schools, and not by some remote organization or remote body like the trustees.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs McLeod.

Mrs McLeod: Oh, five minutes in total?

The Chair: Yes, in total; he only has 10. Mr Wildman for the third party.

Mr Wildman: Mr Hogg, I've heard a presentation by you previously to another committee on education.

Mr Hogg: Equity in funding, I believe it was.

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Mr Wildman: Yes. I'm aware, I think, of some of your views. Could you explain or give some of your understanding as to why it is, when all of us agree — everyone in this room I think agrees that we want to have parents as involved as is possible in the education of their children and in the operation of their local school — that the minister, I understand, and I and I guess my colleague, are getting so many letters from parent councils,

parents who are really interested in their kids' education, saying that they don't want to be trustees, that they don't want to take on the role of trustees, that they want to operate and be involved in their kids' education but they don't want to make the kinds of decisions that up to now trustees have been elected to do?

Mr Hogg: Since I haven't seen their letters it's somewhat difficult for me to comment on it, but I would like to suggest to you that there may be some proactive anxiety here. How did the trustees pick up their expertise? If you've watched trustees like I've watched trustees, you'll know that a lot of them come into the job with very little expertise, very little educational expertise and even less financial expertise.

Mr Wildman: Sometimes they say that about minis-

**Mr Hogg:** It's a hazard of the political job, I'm sure. But they pick it up, and I personally believe that's what will happen with school councils.

Mr Skarica: They say it about parliamentary assistants as well, sir. Regarding the reduced role of trustees as outlined in Bill 104, we've heard a number of presentations from trustees that they feel it will have a disastrous effect on the quality of education on students. You obviously disagree. Could you indicate why you disagree with those statements?

Mr Hogg: You just look at what has happened. The quality of education has gone down significantly in Ontario over the last little while. If you don't believe me, the tests are there: the provincial tests of reading and math in 1988 and IP1 in 1988, IP2 in 1991, the latest TIMSS, there's the latest SIMSS, SAIP and so on and so forth. Clearly they haven't protected the quality of education and that likely is because they don't know education. They haven't been in the classroom. They don't understand the concepts of education.

Interruption.

**Mr Hogg:** Maybe if you'd spend 10 years in the classroom, those people who decide would understand a little bit more of what needs to be done in order to improve the quality of education in classrooms.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Hogg, for being here today. I would caution the audience again not to interject. Mr Hogg has the right to express his views.

Mr Hogg: Madam Chair, they may have noticed that I didn't interject with them, but they may —

**The Chair:** Everyone who comes before the committee has the right to express his or her views unobstructed. Thank you very much.

# THOMAS CIANCONE, SOFIA WARSME, YUK MAK, BATULA WELI, CONSTANCIO JAYOMA

The Chair: Next is a group of presenters: Thomas Ciancone, Sofia Warsme, Yuk Mak, Batula Weli, Constancio Jayoma. I hope I got those more or less correct. If I could ask you to all be seated.

Interruption.

The Chair: May I ask you to continue your debate outside the hearing room. We would like to listen to the

next group. You may feel free to step outside and speak

to any of the presenters, as you wish.

Welcome. You have 10 minutes for your presentation. Mr Thomas Ciancone: I'd like to thank you for the opportunity, Madam Chair and committee members, to address the government of Ontario regarding Bill 104. My first word of advice is, please be slow. Allow time for input from the people in the education system. We have a lot of valuable experience to give to you.

My name is Tom Ciancone. I live in the city of Toronto and work for the Toronto Board of Education as an adult numeracy instructor. When I submitted my name to speak to Bill 104, I was concerned about continued access to basic skills programs for adults, but I thought it better that the students speak for themselves and not just me. I'd like to share my 10 minutes with English-as-asecond-language learners from Toronto ESL literacy and beginners' ESL class. If time permits, I'll contribute my own words in closing.

The classes are actually seated in the audience here. On Friday they discussed together the value of the English classes and they chose four representatives to speak on their behalf, to share their ideas and concerns. Perhaps I'll have each one of you say your names and

you can speak.

Ms Sofia Warsme: Hi, everyone. I'm Sofia Warsme. I wish to be a nurse. I have two children. I think for me English is very important. School is very important for the future for me and my children. Without school I think it's like a wall and you can't see behind the wall.

My dream is to be a nurse. I think without school my dream is finished. I'm only 24 years old and I have two children. I think it's very important for me to go to school, not only to stay at home and not do anything for

the future. Thank you very much.

Ms Batula Weli: My name is Batula. I am a grand-mother. My children need to speak English for jobs and future. I like English because no speak English: no doctor, no hospital. No understand English: eyes closed, ears closed, mouth closed. At school we learn English step by step: school close, step by step close.

Ms Yuk Mak: Hi. I am Yuk Mak. I am building English because people say, "Hello, Yuk Mak, good morning," in English. I am not talking because I no understand English. I come to school. Good. Teacher talking English as you. So now I can say, "I am fine."

Thank you very much.

Mr Constancio Jayoma: My name is Constancio Jayoma. I come from the Philippines. I speak a little English. I speak about government in Canada because in Canada very good, very nice in Canada because even an old man can go to school, for example, like me. In my country, if you're over age, no come to school, but here in Canada it's very good because over age come to school. Very nice government in Canada. Thank you.

**Mr Ciancone:** Those of you who have a copy of this paper, on the other side are other things that the class contributed. It would be great if all of them could be here

but we have very good representatives here.

You have heard from the students, and they have many roles in society. They're the parents, they're the grandparents, the caregivers, the neighbours of the children in our

school. Under the direction of Minister Snobelen, the parent councils are to be integral parts of the school system. The voices of these students must be heard on these parent councils. They must be involved in their children's education.

Why do we have concerns with Bill 104? Let me make three points: One is about access to decision-making, another about funding and then about education priorities.

Access to decision-making: With a Metro mega-board the adult learners will be lost in the shuffle. Did the government think of them when deciding about the parent councils and what role they would play in running schools? What role would adult literacy and ESL classes play in local schools? Half of our classes are co-sponsored with the community. Do community-based programs fit into the vision of a school? What about seniors and adults with physical and developmental handicaps or disabilities? My own students where I teach are learning basic mathematics skills, and those students are developmentally challenged adults. Who will speak for them in the new Metro school board?

About funding: Over the last three years when the Metro school boards have been faced with declining municipal revenue, the first place they cut was in continuing education. Seniors' programs were cut in half. Adult literacy and ESL classes in the city of Toronto decreased from 1,200 in 1992 to just over 700 this year. With the changes in funding, we fear these programs face total elimination. What is the government's funding commitment to basic skills and language programs for

adults?

Priorities: The mandate of the so-called Education Improvement Commission is to outsource non-instructional services. We know by Minister Snobelen's definition of classroom instruction that adult learners do not fit. Putting these notions together, the future education system would totally absolve itself of the responsibility for these adult learners. If the programs exist, they will be divorced from the school system. The standards of curriculum and integration of adult education with that of their children, which we have developed over the last years, will be lost.

I personally have worked on some of this curriculum. In fact, I've worked on numeracy books for adult learners and I'm not sure what will happen if these kind of

curriculum materials are then outsourced.

If this is all lost — we hope not, we hope you're listening — how then is this government going to reinforce this integration and the quality of the instruction that we have at the moment? How will this government make sure that there is access for adults in our education

system?

In conclusion, I'd like to say that language instruction to new immigrants and basic literacy training are necessary for many adults to begin a process of retraining in our rapidly changing society. Adult education programs are essential for the support of children's education since parents with strong literacy and English-language skills can better support their children's learning at home and at school. These programs are not luxuries; they're crucial to the lives of individuals, to our families and to our communities.

The Chair: I want to take this opportunity, on behalf of the committee, to thank all of your presenters and indeed all of your students for coming here today.

Mrs McLeod: I have two questions that I'd like to place on the record for response by the ministry. The first is in direct relationship to the presentation that's just been made. Recognizing the fact that the cuts of some 50% to adult education have meant the loss of as much as 80% of adult education programs outside the Toronto area, I would like some understanding from the ministry that in a new funding formula the adult education funding will be restored to its full level and that full funding will be extended to those areas not currently receiving adult education grant support.

Mr Wildman: I would just add that we're talking here about day school, not just continuing education for adults.

Mr Skarica: Perhaps when we have our meeting today, that's something you could address to the minister.

Mrs McLeod: As you know, Mr Skarica, although I'm going to attend if there's any meeting, I have requested written responses to all of the questions that have been placed on the record and I continue to want written responses.

The second area of questioning has a relationship to a presentation that we heard earlier from Dr Flett, but it's also a question that I was asked to place on the record by people from the Prescott-Russell, Ottawa-Carleton area that I met with last week, and it relates to capital expenditures. Given the fact that the EIC has total control over board budgets this year, and also that boards can't enter into contracts of more than \$50,000 for the current year, can you debenture before you start building? Under the current rules, you cannot raise any dollars, borrow any dollars for school construction costs until you're actually ready to start building. The second question is whether or not boards can enter into debenture repayment plans, borrowing and repayment plans, that extend past December 31, 1997.

Mr Skarica: You want a written response from the minister, correct?

Mrs McLeod: Thank you.

## GERALD CAPLAN

The Chair: Could I ask Mr Gerald Caplan to come forward. Welcome, Mr Caplan. It's a pleasure to have you here with us to share your thoughts.

Mr Gerald Caplan: I'm sorry I couldn't come to Ottawa to accommodate you.

The Chair: We're happy to have you anywhere you can come.

Mr Caplan: Thank you. I want to talk about amalgamation and parent councils. I want to tell you that the Royal Commission on Learning, which I co-chaired — a majority of us walked into that commission having no preconceived views on either of these issues, probably didn't know a heck of a lot about either of them, had no partisan view about them, and what we ended up deciding was based entirely on the facts as we found them. It's only that I want to share with the committee today. I want to try to eschew all ideology, all partisanship and indeed bias as such. I haven't come here to defend

boards. They are complicated, curious creatures and work has to be done with them. This I think is not the way to do it

Let me tell you what we learned. We learned first that David Cooke was hooked on amalgamation and the first thing we discovered was that he had appointed two consultants, Tom Wells, who was, as you all know, a former Conservative Minister of Education under Bill Davis, and Brian Bourns, a former NDP activist turned business consultant in Ottawa, to look into amalgamation, Tom Wells in Windsor-Essex, Brian Bourns in Ottawa-Carleton.

There was no question that Dave Cooke expected, as did Tom Wells and Brian Bourns, that they would come out in a few months with a recommendation for how amalgamation would take place in those two cities. I know it's true because they all told me it was true. You may never have heard of their reports. What in fact both of them recommended, separately and independently with no consultation between them, was that it wasn't worth the candle, even in those two jurisdictions.

They discovered that more cooperation, more sharing of resources, would make much more sense in both those jurisdictions than what they described as the chaos, the disruption, the bitter feelings, the diversion of energies and the possible increased costs of amalgamating those two jurisdictions, even though on paper they seem to everybody so simple, because one would end up levelling up costs rather than levelling them down. Those were serious recommendations in the life of my commission as we came to study amalgamation. I'm sorry they influenced Dave Cooke hardly at all.

Our overview of boards gave us a great deal of surprise because we had been led to believe many of the myths that had been circulating. The number of boards: As you know, they've been grossly exaggerated for several years. Not until I wrote a column for the Toronto Star several weeks ago did people stop referring to the 170 boards in Ontario. There are not 170 real boards in Ontario; there are 128. People have distorted it for years.

Payment of trustees: There are not a whole bunch of \$50,000 trustees. There is one board that pays its trustees \$50,000. There are seven boards that pay up to \$30,000. There are only 17 boards in the entire province that pay more than \$15,000. Ninety-five percent of trustees in Ontario are paid below, often well below, \$20,000, and half of all trustees in Ontario make less than \$10,000. That's how much money is going to be saved.

Are there too many boards? To our own astonishment, given all the rhetoric about excess number of boards, we found that there were far fewer boards in Ontario than in any other province of Canada, by a long shot. Since then — I went back and did the research last week in preparing for this presentation — boards have been downsized in British Columbia, Alberta, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. I'm sure you all know they've been eliminated in New Brunswick.

The result after that downsizing of all those boards is that there are still far fewer boards per student in Ontario than anywhere in Canada, except Nova Scotia. There are far fewer boards in Ontario at the moment than there are in Alberta after it downsized under Premier Klein. Let us have a perspective on how many boards there are.

Are there too many boards? By what standard? What benchmark — to use a word that the education world loves throwing around — should we use to decide what the right number of boards per student is? I want to tell you that there is no piece of research in the entire world that will give you that evidence. If you're looking for accountability, if you're looking for responsibility, if you're looking for democracy, there is no magic formula that says a certain number of boards is best for a certain number of students. It exists not. It is an entirely arbitrary construct, whether you're talking about 128 boards, 170 boards or 68 boards.

1240

Until this bill, the Metropolitan Separate School Board in Ontario, with 100,000 students, was far and away Canada's largest. You have heard 100 — you haven't heard 100 times; you haven't heard 100 witnesses. You have heard from many witnesses that the new amalgamated school board for Metro will have 310,000 students. It will have one trustee for every 14,000 students, for every 25 schools. The government members have to demonstrate that it is possible for accountability to exist in that magnitude of board.

Learning: Learning became for us, because of all the complications in studying education, the final touchstone of all decisions and all priorities. There is no evidence anywhere in the massive literature that exists on the subject that student achievement is affected by the number of boards one way or another, period. Not one of those kids who didn't do well enough in science who was featured in yesterday's Toronto Star is going to do one mark better in science because there are going to be fewer school boards in Ontario.

Costs: There is no substantial evidence that costs will decrease in any great way in any way more than they would if the government pushed, as I believe it should push, boards to share more services and to cooperate more. Most of the functions that boards do now have to be picked up by someone. Don't be deluded. If boards don't do it, someone else will have to and be paid for it.

There is, however, substantial dramatic evidence everywhere in the world that positive reform, reform that helps my kids and yours in the classroom, needs all the energy of all the stakeholders involved in the education system mobilized for classroom achievement. Amalgamation, as you have already seen, whatever you want it to be, will be messy, will be disruptive, will be divisive, will be chaotic and will divert the energies of all trustees, all administrators, all educators and almost all teachers away from the classroom where we need them to do their best for us. It will divide them and has already started dividing them against each other rather than for the common benefit of our kids.

We therefore concluded that if we want to change the classrooms to help our kids, amalgamation of boards is not a priority. I told that to Dave Cooke, who didn't pay attention, and I'm telling it to you, who may not pay attention.

We found nowhere on earth a demonstrably superior model that we thought it made sense for Ontario to emulate. We looked at Chicago and we looked at New Zealand and we looked at New Brunswick and we looked everywhere in the world, and nowhere is there a political structure for boards that is not controversial, that does not have as many critics as it has supporters and that does not have as many negatives as it does pros. Therefore, we decided, like good conservatives, that in the absence of a thoughtful, responsible alternative, it made no sense to destroy the existing system.

To summarize on amalgamation, if amalgamation doesn't enhance learning, if it doesn't foster accountability, if it may not save more money than sharing among boards and if it diverts energy from our kids in the classroom, people are entitled to ask, I say to the members of this government, why are you doing it?

Let me turn to parent councils. I do this with great care because there are so many wonderful parents in this room and whom you've already heard who throw their hearts into working with their schools and I don't want to denigrate their contribution whatsoever. Our report has been distorted repeatedly on these issues.

Let me make it clear as briefly as I can: The top priority for every parent in the province is not to get involved in parent councils but is to get involved personally in their kids' schooling at home. If you had 10 people on every parent council — there are 5,000 schools in Ontario — you'd have 50,000 parents involved. There are two million kids in our schools; there are three million or more parents. Even if every council had 50,000 wonderful parents on it, you wouldn't be speaking to the overwhelming majority of parents in this province who would have no role at all and have no role at all under the present system.

We talked about school community councils, not these limited, narrow parent councils, whose major function would be to mobilize community resources on behalf of the individual school. That is not talked about at all.

There is no evidence — and we looked at the evidence for all of these things; if we were going to introduce or recommend changes, we wanted to know why — that student achievement anywhere is consistently improved by a small number of parents involved in advising or telling principals how to run the school. There's not a jot of evidence to justify that.

Finally, as they are now envisioned in the bill and in what I've understood from the minister, parent councils are not, nor can they ever be, accountable or democratic. Let me do it as briefly as possible. If you're parents you know and if you're not parents, let me tell you.

The way it happens is this: The principal will send a note home with the kids, most of whom won't bring it home. Some parents will read it and some won't. Most parents will not know why they're suddenly being invited to nominate themselves to something called a parent council that they've never heard of before. In the end, you will find, as it's already been found, that a large number, perhaps a majority of parent councils, don't have an election because not enough parents nominate themselves.

If they have an election, the principal sends another note home, which most parents are never going to see, or if they see, they can ignore because they always ignore kids' papers. They're going to be invited to an election meeting where for the first time in their lives they're going to meet 10 or 12 people standing for eight or 10 positions, each of whom is going to get two minutes to stand up and announce their educational philosophy. They will never see those people again because there is no mechanism for keeping in touch. They don't have money for stamps, they don't have enough people to phone us all.

I met this year for the first time, after two years in my kid's school, the people who are on his parents council. I didn't know they existed. I don't know what they do. I know they work very hard, but they never talk to anyone else and they can't talk to anyone else because they have no capacity to do so. They therefore cannot be and will not be accountable. They will not be representative; they cannot be democratic.

Unless you change that whole concept to have, as one of your speakers talked about today, 40 parents involved rather than the eight or 10 sitting on these little councils, unless you get them involved in a large way, you are building in an unaccountable, undemocratic system, and however wonderful some of those parents are, they don't represent me, they don't represent anyone but themselves and their own family. They cannot. Giving them more power makes no sense whatsoever under those circumstances.

I want to say to you that if you care about quality education, which your government consistently says it does, and if you want to improve classroom achievement, as you consistently claim you do, you will withdraw the entire bill because every part of it diverts and distracts attention from all the important ways that we can make our kids' schooling better.

Applause.

The Chair: Order, please. Mr Caplan, I'm sure that all three caucuses would have been delighted to ask you questions. It's my unhappy task to tell you that you've exceeded your time allotment and I regret that.

Mr Caplan: Madam Chair, I appreciate that. I want to tell you that I'm available to all three caucuses at their disposal. I doubt I will hear from all of them.

The Chair: We thank you for the offer.

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair, could I ask please that the two reports that were referred to by Mr Caplan, the Wells report on the Windsor-Essex school board amalgamation study and the Bourns report on the Ottawa-Carleton study, be tabled for members of the committee.

The Chair: Very well.

# PAT SERAFINO

The Chair: Our last presenter for the morning is Pat Serafino. Mr Serafino, I know that you had to reschedule to accommodate one of the other presenters and we thank you very much.

Mr Pat Serafino: Thank you for the accommodation. It's been great. Boy, trying to follow a speaker like that

is going to be hard to do, but I'll try my best.

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Pat Serafino. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on Bill 104. I'm a parent in the York region separate school system and I have a child in the system. I never would have realized that three years into the system I would have been down here speaking to a committee regarding changes or amendments to the Education Act. It's been interesting.

A brief history about our board is that historically it has been grant-reliant and assessment-poor. We've been spending less per pupil than our coterminous boards and actually spend less than the provincial average. I'm happy to say one of the goods that has come out from the ministry announcements is that the equitable funding of our kids is a welcome relief, which will mean that each kid across the province will be funded equitably. One question I do have though is, at what level will they be funded?

1250

With Bill 104 there are some concerns and one of them is the reduction in the number of trustees. This may or may not reduce expenses but I feel and I have a concern that the number of trustees will not be as accessible to the public because of the larger area they will represent.

The Education Improvement Commission I imagine will help maintain the expenditures that each board will prepare. How will the EIC, as we're supposed to name it, recognize the needs of local areas? For example, where I live, it's a high-growth area with young families and young children; ie, there's a need for early childhood education, primarily junior kindergarten. Will the EIC recognize these local needs or solely determine the budgets on economics?

With school councils, it's a great idea to have parental involvement, but as the previous speaker mentioned, what is the responsibility? We need clarification. I'm a member of the parent council and I still see myself as a glorified PTA. Are we going to be given more powers? Are we taking powers away from the trustees? We need clarification on that.

On the outsourcing of information, a few questions regarding that are: How will the loss of special services help to improve education of children in Ontario; how will confidentiality be maintained when there's more than one contractor bidding for services; how will our children be safe when we always have a revolving-door policy, when caretakers are changed, secretaries are changed? Our kids like familiarity. With outsourcing, they won't know who the secretary is or who that caretaker is. Who will be accountable when they're no longer school board employees? Which services now offered will be cut?

Those are the few points that I brought forward. I guess I commend the government for some of the changes that it has done but some of the concerns I have are that you're moving too fast and that you should look back at some of these implementations and don't solely look at it as an economic solution because ultimately our common goal is to educate our kids properly. That's it.

**Mr Wildman:** You've raised a lot of very important questions that I hope will be answered before the bill goes to clause-by-clause so that we can perhaps, if it's going to go through, amend it so that it responds to some of those concerns.

I think the central one you've raised, though, as a Catholic school ratepayer and parent is, at what level will you be funded? Right now the funding formula, we understand, will be developed and will be released for consultation in April and May, after the government's schedule for this bill. It means that this bill will already be law. Do you think that's the right way to do go about it? Wouldn't it make sense to know something about the funding formula before we pass this legislation that affects all the boards in the province?

Mr Serafino: Obviously. Boards have to set their budgets, I believe, so it's like putting the cart before the horse. I would imagine. It would be important to have the funding model before that. Then you know how much

you have to allocate.

Mr Wildman: I doubt very much that the \$5.4 billion that have been removed from the residential property tax is going to be covered completely, keeping in mind that the minister says he needs to take another \$1 billion out

Mr Serafino: As a parent, I look forward to more

cuts

Mr Skarica: We've heard a number of presentations about parent councils and we've heard from a number of witnesses that people on parent councils don't want more powers and that type of thing and don't want more say in the schools and so on and so forth. How do you envision parent councils working? What would you like to see your role be?

Mr Serafino: Right now we're an advisory committee and we can suggest to the principal or to the board what

we need changed. It's a twofold problem. We don't have enough involvement at the beginning because of the liabilities, the responsibilities that go with making decisions that maybe an elected body right now like the trustees have. People go out, put their vote in and they know that's the person to contact. We can't get a hold of all the parents, that's obvious. Do I want more responsibilities? I don't think so. Do

I want as an adviser to let you know what the day-to-day needs of the school are? Yes, I think that's important. But to give us full rein of what we need in there, I think that's crazy. You open it up for special interest groups. Who knows what the Pandora's box will be? But I think if it remains an advisory capacity, it will function a lot

Mrs McLeod: I want to ask you a little bit about the relationship between the role of the parents and the role of school boards and whether or not it would be more difficult for you as a parent to advocate for the concerns of the children in your school if the school boards ceased to exist altogether.

Mr Serafino: Repeat that again. I'm sorry.

Mrs McLeod: One of my concerns is that the school boards become essentially unworkable under Bill 104. Some of them are going to be absolutely huge, they're going to have a lot fewer trustees and they're going to have absolutely no flexibility for funding. The funding decisions will all be made by the ministry. The trustees are in a rather thankless role. Somebody called it centralized decision-making and decentralized blame. I think there will be some real questions raised about whether

school boards even continue to exist. Would it be difficult for you as a parent to have to go directly to the Ministry of Education and fight for fair funding for your

Mr Serafino: Yes, it would be difficult. You're going to be opening it up to every single parent. At least right now there's a graspable devil there, which is the trustee. God knows, we've used them as sounding boards with problems that maybe didn't arise from there but came from the ministry level. It would be a lot more difficult, I would imagine, to try to contact a ministry official. If they could set something up that meets local needs, so that we could talk to them about it, that might help. But then that just replaces the name "trustee" with something different.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Serafino, for being with us this afternoon and sharing your views with

We are recessed until 3:30 this afternoon. The committee recessed from 1257 to 1539.

#### SID BRUYN

The Chair: In view of the time, I'd like to get started with Sid Bruyn. We've just finished question period in the House and members will be coming here momentarily. You shouldn't worry that there aren't a lot of members here at the moment. Everything you say goes on the record and will be examined and taken note of. Thank you very much for coming. You have 10 minutes to make your presentation.

Mr Sid Bruyn: I don't know if it'll be shorter than 10,

The Chair: If that's the case, then the committee will ask you some questions.

Mr Bruyn: Or I get to ask you questions.

The Chair: That would be fine.

Mr Bruyn: My name is Sid Bruyn and I have two children here in the Toronto school board. I am personally in favour of a very strong, well-funded public education system. That's my starting point for everything. But I am strongly opposed and question the efficacy of the concept of having school trustees in Toronto serve up to 50,000 people.

If we're going to go to the riding system, it won't work. The school trustee for me is the only person I can get to on the phone. He's my elected representative whom I can speak to. Rather than an MPP who'll return my phone calls after a week or two, a school trustee will usually return my phone calls the next day. I am concerned that if a school trustee has to serve 10 times more parents than he's doing now, it won't work. The efficacy

doesn't work.

I'm also opposed to having school trustees receive only a small stipend for serving as a trustee. This will allow only special interest groups to run candidates to do their bidding, and this especially includes corporations that wish to further their influence and expand their markets targeted at student bodies - or unions or what have you. If you only pay a trustee \$5,000 maximum, there will be a problem; only special interest groups will run candidates or will be able to afford to put up a candidate.

I want to quote Honourable John Snobelen right now, "Ontarians have watched as other jurisdictions around the world have reformed their education systems to manage the costs of education by reducing duplication and waste and streamlining administration and bureaucracy."

That's all well and good, but I'd like to quote another person. Lucy Annetta is a parent from Australia. She's currently living in Toronto for a year. Australia is one of the countries that have revamped their school system in a matter that Mr Snobelen finds commendable.

Here's what she says in a newsletter about what

actually happened to their children's schools:

"Classroom numbers rose. Specialist programs such as ESL, remedial literacy and numeracy were severely cut back. Classroom assistants were cut. Hundreds of schools closed. Discouraged, some of the best teachers abandoned the state (public) education system. Schools now have to self-fund 'extras.' This means that the school community have never-ending fund-raising activities. So-called 'free education' has all but disappeared. Schools in more affluent areas are able to raise funds more readily so they have better equipment and resources.

"As the cuts gripped, morale sank and the community lost confidence in the public school system and there has been a steady drift of students to private schools. Secondand third-class" — or third-rate — "private schools have done very well out of the conservative government's cuts — which suits the government" down there "as it is

in favour of privatization."

I'm afraid that same thing will happen to our school systems once you start cutting from our public systems. People are doing to dwindle and slowly go away. You're going to have a problem there. Schools in richer areas are going to have better resources. This is not what a public education system is. A public education system is where it's for all.

To quote Mr Snobelen again, January 13, 1997, "We will give parents a greater direct voice in education by entrenching into law the principle that every school must

have an advisory school council."

Again, this all sounds well and good, but thinking it through is another question. What exactly will the Minister of Education do if there are schools where no parents feel able to take on the added responsibility of being on school councils? Will he press-gang them? Will he legally sanction them? Will he withdraw the funding for the schools?

In England, local school councils are mandated. They're given a per pupil budget and they're responsible for hiring and paying staff and setting and ensuring

standards for the school.

Marketing the school is one of the most important functions of the school council because each new student increases the grants from the local education authority. Again, very onerous, very questionable.

How well do school councils work? A Manchester

teacher whom I know, Dominic Bowler, said:

"At the school where I teach, it's very hard to find parents to serve on the council. Most of them are struggling to find work and about half of them are new immigrants.

"In my daughter's school, which is in a more affluent neighbourhood, school councils work better. They know how to market the schools and can raise more money to get computers and things that the LEA budget doesn't cover. But even there, many parents don't feel well enough informed to take on the commitment of being on the council."

As I said before, I have two children in the public education system here in Toronto. They both were at one inner-city school for about four years and then my son hit what's called the boredom wall and started falling out of his desk and not paying attention to the teacher properly. We went into a different way of looking at things: How can we improve his education? He is now in what's called an alternative school within the Toronto system and so is my daughter.

What's remarkable, and this is the scary thought about Mr Snobelen's concept of school councils, is that at the alternative school I go to we have, on our school council, lawyers, we have the writer who did the Avro Arrow, we have a famous actress and we have other professionals. We have fairly well-educated, fairly affluent parents.

At the inner-city school we went to before, we had mostly new immigrants and being a new immigrant myself, being a child of immigrants, I know new immigrants don't come in front of PTAs. They're afraid because they have English as a second language, they don't feel comfortable to speak and, historically, they believe that schools take care of the children; it's not their responsibility. For us now to imbue in them, to say, "No, you have to be responsible for this," is not fair.

The PTA at the school we used to go to is not representative at all of the student body. There are two or three parents who are involved; for most of the student body, their parents are not reflected at all because either both parents are working, don't have time, don't feel comfortable, don't speak the language properly or feel embarrassed. I think the whole idea of school councils has to be thought through or looked at again, and that's why I'm in general opposition to Bill 104. There are many things in it which haven't been well thought through yet and need further discussion and further detailing.

I found it very telling that the day the committee hearings were to start, Mr Snobelen's reaction was: "The time for talk is over. It's time for action." We've just supposedly started these committee hearings for that very reason, to speak about these things. So it seems he has his mind set on a plan which doesn't seem to be going anywhere or doesn't seem to be well thought through at all.

Mr Skarica: Sir, I have some questions for you. Australia, as well, had a debt problem and got involved in education cutbacks and so on and so forth, and obviously we have a deficit problem. Could you perhaps give us some ideas or some opinions you may have on how we could streamline the system without affecting the classroom, ie, making it more efficient?

Mr Bruyn: There have to be efficiencies, of course. We can't just kind of pour money into a system. How I would personally do it? If you paid me \$50,000 a year to do a study, I could tell you. I don't mean to sound flippant, but I think there must be ways with your purchasing departments, with certain departments.

Also, I hate to bring up the constitutional flaw that happened in 1867 when we designed a system for two separate systems. That has to be looked at too. I think we have to look at that. Quebec is looking at that. Manitoba has looked at that. Newfoundland has looked at that. There's a cost-cutting way. If we have two separate systems, of course you're going to have two administrations. That is something that has to be talked about, that has to be broached. It would take a lot of political will to broach that, I understand, and a lot of political courage. That's one of the ways.

Yes, there must be other ways where moneys can be saved, but I don't think it should be done on the back of the students. I believe in a well-funded education system. If you're increasing class sizes, that's not the best way to go. There must be ways. We have to find them.

I don't blame it all on administration. I don't think school trustees cost us that much money. I think in Toronto they make \$40,000 a year; a teacher makes far more than that. We have many more teachers and we're not saying, "Cut the teachers out of the system." I think trustees do a job and do a job well and are representative for us.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Bruyn, for coming here. We're going to have to recess for a few minutes because we have a vote in the House. With your indulgence, we'll go and vote on the next piece of legislation and resume after that. It shouldn't be longer than about 10 minutes.

The committee recessed from 1549 to 1605.

# LINDA MacNAUGHTON

The Chair: I ask Linda MacNaughton to come forward. As she does, let me apologize again to everyone in the room. We were called away for a series of votes and the hearings recessed for that purpose.

Ms MacNaughton, welcome. Thank you very much for being here. You have 10 minutes for your presentation.

Mrs Linda MacNaughton: Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee. As a parent of three children, grades 5, 10 and 12, in the Durham Board of Education, I have many concerns regarding Bill 104. I am not here to defend the status quo and every decision made by the trustees and school boards of Ontario, but I am here to defend public education and the democratic process. As a citizen of Ontario, I am very discouraged by the idea that the system has to be declared broken and so much division has to be created in the name of improvement.

I believe in educators, including classroom teachers, school boards, parents and governments working together to bring about positive change. It is unfortunate that many of the dedicated people working in education have been painted with the same brush and called self-serving and part of the waste and duplication in the system.

When I went to my Conservative MPP last November, I was disappointed when the letter I received as a follow-up to our meeting stated, "When even a former Liberal cabinet minister says that 47 cents of every education dollar in Ontario is spent outside the classroom, you know there's a problem." Upon reading the Sweeney report, I soon realized that the "classroom" had been redefined. This January the Ernst and Young study made

us realize that once again so many of the necessary supports for students and teachers were considered outside-classroom expenses. When the Common Sense Revolution only promised to guarantee education spending in the classroom, it is understandable why many parents are concerned about further cuts.

The Durham board only spends 2.03% on central administration, and the system cannot run on empty. Our board is at a 40% grant rate, so last year's cuts have already had an impact in our classrooms. We must make sure that class sizes do not increase. The grade 7 at our local school has 38 students. It's hard to believe they'll be prepared for the new streamlined high school program.

The Durham board has the lowest per pupil funding of any public board in the GTA. I believe that to make student funding more equitable, a new per pupil funding formula is necessary, but do we sacrifice the programs in one area to improve those of another? If the same amount of money stays in the system, it may mean that a large portion of funding will be shifted from the public system to the separate school system. As a supporter of a system that is all-inclusive, I have some concerns about this.

Ontario has the largest, most complex education system in Canada. The proposed 100% centralized funding system will not allow for local flexibility. Professor Stephen Lawton of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education believes that school boards should be allowed to raise at least 5% to 10% in their communities because there are many things you can't see centrally. Our school boards will simply become complaint departments for Queen's Park.

As elected provincial governments come and go—we've had three in the last decade—the school boards have provided a level of relative consistency in the system. We will be losing all control of a local dedicated education tax that would protect the system from a provincial government that may be listening to groups such as the Taxpayers Coalition of Peel, who would like to see the average per pupil funding lowered by an additional \$1,682 annually. This would indeed be a guarantee that all children in the publicly funded system would be second-class.

While the Harris government would like us to believe we have the costliest system in Canada and almost anywhere in North America, Statistics Canada in 1995 said we are sixth in Canada in per pupil spending, and a recent study verified by Informetrica says that Ontario has dropped to 46th in per pupil spending among 63 Canadian and US jurisdictions in the 1995 school year.

There is a lot of money to be made in privatizing parts of the education system, but I believe governments at all levels and school boards must be guardians of society. A profit-driven business agenda is not part of my view of a democratic society that tries to provide equal opportunity for all children through a quality, publicly funded education system.

Why is Bill 104 so extreme? It has gone way beyond the Sweeney report, and I read it from cover to cover. Our board is not being amalgamated for now. However, a precedent is being set with the amalgamation of the Metro Toronto public school boards. While some amalgamation may be beneficial, why create a mega-board of

300,000 students, over half the size of the Alberta education system that has 66 school boards? Is an outer GTA board next?

According to the Canadian School Board Association, Ontario has an average of 13,547 students per school board as compared to the Canadian average of only 8,557. In a January 30 conversation I had with Stephen Lawton from OISE, he said that there are diseconomies of scale once school boards exceed 60,000. He believes amalgamations are very costly in the short term and will save little money in the future. He also said that the amalgamation will further complicate trying to bring any real improvements into the system. I certainly feel badly for those separate school trustees in northern Ontario who will have to drive nine hours to meet together.

The Sweeney report also recommended a cap of \$15,000 for trustees' salaries. Our trustees in Durham make \$12,920, and most people I speak to do not feel they are overpaid. A cap of \$5,000, as proposed by Bill 104, will result in the less affluent not being able to afford to run as a trustee in many areas. I also think it will result in the acclamation of more people with special interest agendas, and a far less democratic choice.

The drastically reduced number of trustees will lead to far less accountability. It's impossible to envision one trustee for almost 14,000 students in the Toronto board. In our own board we are concerned in the township of Brock that we will no longer have trustee representation. Ours is the most rural of all the municipalities in Durham region and we are very concerned that our unique needs will no longer have a voice.

Will the diminished role of school boards and an increased mandate for school community councils lead to even more inequity and inconsistency in the system? Will members of SCCs be willing and able to take on expanded roles? They have been given very little time to evolve and many have remarked that it's a steep learning curve. Those of us who volunteer in our communities are finding it increasingly more difficult to do it all, and I know a lot of people who do not want to become surrogate trustees.

I have concerns after a recent conversation I had with one of the co-chairs of the Coalition for Education Reform, a group that has been lobbying for charter schools. She believes this government is receptive to creating legislation that will introduce charter schools to this province. Many parents I've talked to think this could be a very divisive step that would lead to further erosion of the public education system. Will the voucher system and more private schools be next?

While standardized testing has some merits, such as finding more effective ways of teaching and helping parents gauge their children's progress, we must also be very careful about how the results are used. These test scores should never be used for political purposes, as they recently have been, or to create a shop-for-schools scenario.

As an Ontarian who respects democracy, the creation in Bill 104 of the Education Improvement Commission is deeply troubling. This new level of unaccountable and probably expensive bureaucracy is undermining the rights of our democratically elected trustees. They are not

accountable to any of the stakeholders in education, and their decisions are final and cannot be appealed. They are also supposed to facilitate and promote the outsourcing of support staff, such as educational assistants, secretaries and custodians. As a parent, I'm concerned that by privatizing these jobs, we will not be assured of the same level of consistency and quality of staff. Some of these staff members have been at the same schools for decades and are a valuable part of our school community.

As we live in a rural community, our children are bused to school. We must be sure our children's safety is never compromised for the bottom line. In most cases you get what you pay for, and while we all agree money must be spent very wisely, especially due to the fiscal reality of a deficit, you reach a point where you can't do more for less. As parents we want to know that this government sees education as an investment for the future of our province and not just as an expense getting in the way of a promised income tax cut. We want undistorted and accurate information and more than lip-service consultation. We certainly don't want to be lulled into passivity by one-sided press conferences and expensive, simplistic and partisan television commercials.

We don't just want common sense from our elected governments; we want to see uncommon wisdom — that's a phrase we're all speaking now — when creating changes that will affect the children of this province for years to come. We don't want the vision of the 1994 Royal Commission on Learning to be lost. An improved curriculum is important, but it must be supported by giving enough time and resources to those who must deliver it. While we all want to see improved student achievement, I believe this can only be accomplished by building on the strengths of the present system.

When Premier Harris made his comments in London, England, last September about the Durham Board of Education winning the Carl Bertelsmann Award of Excellence, it was to encourage businesses to invest in Ontario due to our quality of life and our fine education system.

I'm sure the majority of educators and trustees are willing to bring about positive change, but creating a crisis and demoralizing the system is not conducive to a productive teaching and learning environment. As parents, our bottom line is, will these reforms equip our children for the 21st century and give them a lifelong love of learning?

That's the level of accountability I want from this government. Please amend Bill 104. It does not need to be this extreme.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs MacNaughton. Mrs MacNaughton: I've used up my 10 minutes.

The Chair: You have indeed; you've used it fully. Thank you very much for appearing before us.

Mr Wildman: Madam Chair, on a point of privilege: I understand from the exchange in the House that the Speaker has basically said that the Chair of the committee can rule — it's my understanding that you have not yet ruled — on the point I raised with regard to the so-called presenter profiles government members have on their desks on the blue paper. I wonder if you could rule as to whether these documents should be shared with members

of the committee, since they apparently were prepared by ministry staff, thus using taxpayers' money, so that all members of the committee will know what's in them and members of the public will know what's in them.

As I understand it, the parliamentary assistant and his colleagues have said there's nothing seriously controversial in them, that they're quite innocuous. In that case, I would think the government members would be quite

happy to have them tabled.

The Chair: I'd like to recap the events of this morning. When the issue was first raised, it was raised as a point of order, and I ruled that it was not a point of order. After the point of order, I was still prepared to entertain discussion following the presentations of the people who were here this morning. However, there was a motion put forward by you, Mr Wildman, and that motion was defeated and there was no need to discuss the

point any further.

You are now raising it as a point of privilege. I understand that to be a point of privilege and I think it's

a valid point of privilege.

My understanding of the particular documentation in question, from Mr Skarica's intervention this morning, is that it was prepared with ministry staff, and presumably ministry funds, and distributed only to the government caucus members by ministry staff. Is that still the case,

Mr Skarica?
Mr Skarica: Yes. It hasn't changed in the last couple of hours

The Chair: Well, you weren't sure. That's why I wanted to be absolutely clear. In my view, given the fact that it is public moneys that were used and civil service staff who prepared it —

Mr Skarica: Excuse me on a point of privilege: Before you rule, I'd just like to respond. It may be too

The Chair: If you wish. I looked around to see if there would be any comments.

Mr Skarica: My point this morning was that apparently this has been used on our committee hearings previously and this request has never been made. I understand the previous government had it prepared in a similar fashion, so it's nothing unusual. I might point out that the information in there is gleaned basically from newspaper clippings, as I understand, so it's all public information.

In my opinion, from a procedural point of view, if you rule that it be provided now, you would be in effect overruling the vote we had this morning where you ruled on a point of order and we voted on it and the motion was defeated.

The Chair: The motion this morning was not a point of order. It was a separate motion. We did not deal with the point of privilege which Mr Wildman has raised this afternoon. While it may be the same substance, it's been correctly termed as a point of privilege and I recognize it as a point of privilege. Does anyone else want to add anything?

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Mrs Caplan: If the information is as Mr Skarica says it is, I don't understand why he or the government would have an objection to releasing the document. I would call on him to do that so you don't have to rule, Madam

Chair, on something which quite clearly, I believe, should be in the public domain.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I also want to comment on one of the comments the parliamentary assistant made. I served for about five years as a member of various and sundry committees when our party was government and we didn't have that kind of research on people. We had research done on the issues. There was substantial research, but we didn't put together dossiers on people who came before committees. That wasn't part of what we saw as appropriate research, so we didn't do it. To say that other governments or other people have done this is, in my experience, not the case.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): There's a very simple way out of this. The parliamentary assistant has admitted that this information is being gathered and collated at the public expense. I would suggest it's very simple: If it's public expense, it's public domain, and you shouldn't have to rule. The parliamentary assistant should make it available to us. If he doesn't make it available to us, I think there's only one ruling that must take place.

The perception for the people sitting there is that they're being targeted because in a democratic society they choose to put their point of view forward. Because of that, there's a description of them called, "Description," "Position" and "Questions to ask." I don't think that is the perception any government would want the people they supposedly represent to have. I suggest the only right thing to do is to give it to us. That's all. Give it to them. It's no big deal; it shouldn't be a big deal.

This government has a tendency to make small things big things. These people want to know, what is the government saying about them? What did the government say about Mrs MacNaughton? I would love to know what the government said about her. Her presentation was excellent. It made an abundant amount of sense. Let's see. It's public information. It's paid for by Mrs MacNaughton. She wants to know what this government is saying about her.

Mr Skarica: I think you're going to be very disappointed when you get it, and I think you will. This is very similar to the same items you are preparing, and the last government did do it. I have been informed that the Ministry of Citizenship provided similar information to the previous government. In any event, it's up to you now to decide this, Madam Chairman.

The Chair: I'm very concerned about the fact that -

do you have a new point of order?

Mrs Caplan: Yes. I believe there is precedent to assist you, Madam Chair. As the parliamentary assistant was speaking, I recalled serving on committee and having a ruling that said that any information made available to government caucus members by the ministry should be made available for all members of committee. If it was something that was prepared by their caucus services — I recall that there was a precedent to that effect, that this issue had come up once before when information was seen to be distributed to members of the government caucus. I believe the ruling is a precedent that says that when information is visibly given to some members of committee that has been prepared for them by ministry, it should be made available to all members of the committee.

Mr Wildman: I don't want to prolong things — I honestly don't want to; I'd like to hear the presenters — but I do want to say that in my view, if the ministry has prepared policy material for the parliamentary assistant or for the minister, that should not necessarily be available to all members of the committee. It's really up to the minister or to the parliamentary assistant to decide whether it should be released to all members of the committee. But to have material apparently gathered about presenters is quite a different matter.

Frankly, I'm at a loss to understand what's going on. If it's so innocuous, why the problem about releasing it? The very fact that the government doesn't want to release it makes me suspicious. I just think we could clear this all up by having it released rather than forcing the Chair to make a ruling, but if that's what it comes to, I guess you have to, Chair. If it's so innocuous and it doesn't really contain anything that's controversial, release it and let's get this over with so we can all perhaps use the questions for asking presenters about their views.

The Chair: There being no further comments, the facts are these: that information has been gathered about private citizens coming before this committee; that the information was gathered by ministry officials using public resources and visibly delivered in this committee by a ministry official only to the government caucus. That, I would rule, is not acceptable and that information should be released to all members of the committee under those circumstances.

**Mr Skarica:** All right. Before I turn it over, Mrs MacNaughton, since she's been specifically referred to, the information on you is as follows:

"Description: Ms Linda MacNaughton has requested to make a presentation at the Bill 104 hearings.

"Position: Not stated.

"Questions" for a government member to ask: "If Bill 104 is passed, what opportunities do you feel exist for boards to achieve efficiencies while continuing to provide the quality education in your community."

That's the dossier on Mrs MacNaughton.

The Chair: With respect, Mr Skarica, I allowed you to finish that because it won't be possible to release it immediately, but the full text will be released to all members.

Mr Wildman: I hope that's an indication that this has been much ado about nothing. If it has been, I don't understand why the government didn't release it in the first place.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We will now proceed.

Mrs Johns: Another 15 minutes lost.

The Chair: It could have been prevented.

#### LYNDA BUFFETT

The Chair: Will Ms Lynda Buffett please come to the table. Ms Buffett, thank you very much for being here. I apologize for the delay as we were clearing up that matter. You have 10 minutes for your presentation.

Ms Lynda Buffett: I'd like to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak today. I'd like to bring forward some information that I think would be invaluable to the committee simply because of the line of work I'm involved in right now.

I fully support Bill 104. Since I work directly with school boards and teachers' federations, I would like to point out the immediate effect that even the discussion of this bill has had; it has helped to reduce spending across Ontario in recent weeks.

Already there has been a greater focus placed on the issue of accountability by school boards. For example, the cost associated with group benefits, which accounts for one of the largest payroll expenses outside of salaries, is now being reviewed in a far more objective fashion. I know this because this is what I do every day.

Long-standing relationships with employee benefit consulting firms have been cut off in an effort to assess the real cost of administering these plans. Their management and administration costs have been excessive and, as many teachers' federation reps have begun to find out, there are ways to save money in this area.

By making school boards meet strict spending guidelines, as has been discussed with the introduction of this bill, during this next year prior to amalgamation, accountability from school boards during recent contract negotiations has already resulted in significant savings. It has allowed a far more open process to take place.

The new education commission will be able to monitor these same activities more closely, and I'm sure a lot of

other areas of expenditure.

This commission will certainly not function as a dictatorship, as many have claimed, but will provide a means to determine if expenditures are realistically being looked at in line with other boards when they do a comparison. Parent councils, teachers and others will have an alternative source to seek out assistance when reviewing and questioning costs of their school boards and their schools.

I have already become involved in work with union groups all over the province in this regard as it relates to reviewing the costs, as I mentioned earlier, associated with benefit plans. The school boards, I'm finding to my relief, are finally starting to provide more information and more disclosure of information than they have in the past. 1630

Once this transition period of this next year is over and the new district boards are formed, this commission, I believe, should be continued in some function or capacity as a watchdog to ensure that accountability remains a priority for school boards; otherwise, the complacency of the past will continue.

For many of the smaller boards, in the more remote areas of the north especially, cost-effective plans are far more difficult to negotiate with school board officials and a great deal of resistance has existed in the past with some of these boards in trying to implement alternative

arrangements.

High administrative fees charged for these programs due to a lack of staffing have resulted in wasted tax dollars. Valuable financial resources could have been more wisely spent, yet many school boards chose to increase taxes and place the blame for these increases on cuts to provincial funding, instead of working within the budgets.

With changes to be made to a new funding model for school boards, this will allow trustees and school boards to focus on more important issues, like educating students and preparing them for the challenges that lay ahead in the future.

The Report on School Board Spending 1995-96 confirms what I've already seen, that large discrepancies in boards' spending of their resources, as much as 20%, have taken place. Insured benefits to teaching staff account for a great deal of this discrepancy. However, some of the savings I have found are in the range of 45%

Teachers, I believe, will be willing to take a more hands-on approach in the decision-making process about benefit costs. This is good news for students in the education system. Students need to be assured that money saved in administrative waste and duplication will be passed on to the classroom. These improvements will bring about these changes to classroom spending.

Further savings generated by the formation of new district boards will allow these savings to go even further. Teachers' federations can now choose to become partners in controlling these spiralling expenses. Up until now, school boards have tried to retain exclusive control of this area of expenditures.

These changes will allow many existing federations to establish their own plans and leave the job of administration of payroll deductions to the new district boards. This would go a long way in simplifying the negotiations of benefits.

The teachers' groups I have discussed this concept with to date and have been working with have been very actively involved in developing better programs with improved packages, at the same time reducing the role of the current boards, and have still managed to save money.

Bill 104, I'm pleased to state, has become a catalyst in providing this new opportunity to teachers. The real impact of this bill will mean a more effective education system and greater opportunities for today's students to perform at their best in an ever-changing work environment.

The issue of fewer boards and trustees is something else I would like to discuss. The political consensus by all three parties was that the system was top-heavy. All three parties supported a reduction in the number of school boards. The reduction to 66 from the current 129 boards is long overdue.

While it may sound extreme, I can give you an example of the current French-language boards and just show you what kind of streamlining has taken place. There are currently 11, plus 59 sections of boards and eight advisory committees. Already discussions have begun that will allow these teachers to coordinate their existing benefits under one program while dealing with other issues together as a group. Northern Ontario will bring together 1,000 French teachers instead of the fragmented groups and numbers across Ontario today. This has been seen as a very positive step. These reforms will bring back accountability to the education system.

Unfortunately, all the fearmongering by local school board trustees in Toronto recently has created concern on the part of parents. I can honestly say that after attending a meeting in my community several weeks ago, I was so outraged by the propaganda that night I felt the need to speak to the issues today in this public hearing process. Unfortunately, the panel discussion that took place that night didn't focus on the real concerns raised by parents and they weren't addressed.

I believe Bill 104 will resolve many of the current funding issues. However, these school board trustees in Toronto appear to have their own agenda. Some of the earlier speakers discussed their concern with the capping of salaries at \$5,000. A lot of the trustees I've spoken to outside of the Toronto area don't even earn \$5,000 and they've managed to perform the job quite well. Perhaps it's time for some of these individuals to step aside and make way for the parents and other taxpayers who have a genuine interest in future of education.

Bill 104 will bring greater accountability to the education system and with it the needs of local communities will be fairly represented. This, in turn, will bring with it a return of public trust in the education system.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Buffett. You've used your entire 10 minutes. We thank you very much for appearing before the committee today to voice your views.

**Mr Duncan:** I have a question to pose to the government and the ministry. The minister in the House today said this bill has nothing to do with education finance, yet the delegation spoke about this bill clarifying education finance. Could we have an opinion from the Ministry of Education with respect to whether or not this bill deals with government finance?

Mr Skarica: There are going to be written responses to all your questions.

Mr Duncan: Is she correct that this bill will clarify education finance or is the minister correct?

Mr Skarica: I think it's pretty clear that most of the finance issues will be dealt with later.

Mr Duncan: So she's incorrect when she says this will clear up the financing?

The Chair: You've asked for an opinion and Mr Skarica has agreed to provide it in writing.

## MARION ENDICOTT

The Chair: Marion Endicott, welcome to our committee. Thank you for your patience.

Ms Marion Endicott: Thank you for having me. I'm just watching the clock because of course it's that time of day when our kids are coming home and now I'm a bit behind schedule.

The Chair: We apologize for that. Thank you very

Ms Endicott: I'm here as a parent. I have three children, one in grade 12, one in grade 8 and one in grade 4. I know that parental involvement is important. It enhances the school when we're involved, it enhances our own children's education when they know we are involved as parents and it enhances our abilities as parents as we learn through the school about education and about how to raise children.

I value the opportunity I've had to be involved in my children's schools over time, and I only wish I had more

time to be involved. I would like to say that my involvement in the school system, such as it has been, has given me a deep appreciation for the Ontario school system as it presently is. I am downright proud of it. From that perspective, I come here today with deep, deep concerns about the impact of Bill 104.

As a parent, I see this bill as fundamentally the beginning of the slippery slope to degrading what is right now an internationally recognized excellent education system down to essentially what we see south of the border. In fact, our Premier often — I don't know how — mentions the system south of the border as though it is something to be looked to. However, our knowledge of the schools south of the border is that any parent who has a choice in the matter will not choose to send their children to a public school. That is what we do not want to see happen here. Our public schools are something to be proud of and we want to keep them that way.

I would like to comment on four elements of Bill 104 from the perspective of my main concerns.

The first is the reduction to the number of school trustees and the reduction to the pay they will receive. One of the key elements of our successful schools has been the outcome of hard work and dedication of our school trustees. They come to innumerable meetings. They come to science fairs. They come to concerts. They meet with parents whenever they ask and listen to their concerns. I don't know how they do it, quite frankly, but as a result of their activity, they know their schools, they know the teachers, they know the kids, they know their community, they know the issues that need to be dealt with. Through the experience of dealing with a number of schools in this kind of depth, they gain insights and experience that helps them to come up with solutions to problems.

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This local knowledge that they gain and, if they're good and get elected year after year, carry forward through the years they then give to the system as a whole so that the entire Ontario school system can be built upon the expert knowledge at the local level given to the higher level.

The drastic reduction of the number of school trustees in Bill 104 will not allow for local knowledge. It will not leave time for the school trustees to know the issues and it will not leave time for them to think imaginatively for solutions to problems.

Even if the territories were not reduced as is being proposed, the \$5,000 cap on salaries for these trustees makes us wonder who would, who could, give that kind of dedication, that kind of energy, that kind of commitment to knowing about what our schools need.

Apparently, according to the previous speaker, the people in the rural areas managed to do this. I'm not familiar with the rural areas; I'm familiar with Toronto, and I certainly know in Toronto that those school trustees are working day and night. It would be pretty hard to do it for \$5,000 a year, assuming that you're not independently wealthy.

Essentially, the flexibility of our school system and its highly respected sensitivity to local needs will be gone. What we will get, if we reduce the number of school trustees and if we put a cap on their salaries, is a rigid system, a system of one school fits all, and I cannot imagine that this will be a benefit to future Canadians who will guide our society.

The second issue I'd like to address is the disappearance of democracy. I know you've probably heard this a thousand times and maybe you're tired of hearing it, and it doesn't come easy to use the words "dictatorship and the disappearance of democracy," but I find myself forced to say it because that's what I see. The formation of the Education Improvement Commission is an astounding blow to our democratic system of electing trustees who provide an ear to our concerns as parents and as community members.

We are concerned about the education of our children, our children who will have to find their place in our future society, who will guide our society forward as the years go by. We are being denied our voice. We are being denied input into the reorganization of a system that will determine how they do that. It's pretty ironic that this government, which proposes to give more power to parents in the form of parent councils, will not even listen to them in the implementation of such a thing.

What lesson are we giving to our young students in democratic society? What do we hope to teach them by the appointment of such a committee? "If people disagree with you, even if they're in the majority, don't worry about it. Just use your power." That's the lesson being learned by these implementation committees.

We have elected trustees to guide our education system and Bill 104 has taken away our vote. It will take away our vote. It has taken away our vote because of the retroactivity clause in the bill.

I've completely lost track of time, so tell me when I have five minutes left.

Just a word about school councils. I understand that the legislation of school councils is actually not part of Bill 104 per se, but it is integral to the whole scope of Bill 104 through the education implementation council, and the government has indicated its commitment to legislating the necessity of these councils.

As an active parent, as a parent who seeks to find out as much as she can about what's going on, to understand the system, to promote the best possible education, not only for my own children but for society as a whole, I am not and I cannot be informed sufficiently to have the kind of power that a school council would propose to give to me. I can't do it and I don't want to do it. I have a job, I have a family, I have other things I have to do, and I can't take that power. It would be irresponsible.

I don't have years of experience in learning about educational theories. I don't have the years of experience of being elected again and again and going to see different schools, of talking to educators, of talking to principals, of talking to all the people in the system to understand what really happens, and what are the different solutions for problems and what are exciting new, innovative ideas to improve our education system. I don't have that experience.

I read things in the newspaper. I see something on the TV. I know about my own particular school where my kids go. That's what informs me, but that's not enough.

I want to be informed, I want to have input, but I do not want power. I want my elected trustees to do that.

I would like to address the question of the funding cut. There was some discussion here about whether Bill 104 has financial implications or not. I'm confused on this issue myself, but as far as I can tell, it does have finan-

cial implications.

Bill 104 includes the transfer from the residential tax base to the province in the form of grants. In a non-political world maybe that would have no financial impact, but our understanding is that even though the province promises to top up what the Toronto schools would get under that system, in recognition of the special expenses Toronto has as a result of its immigrant population, its inner-city population etc, the province does not in fact recognize all the needs. The calculations which have been done indicate that by and large Toronto schools will suffer a 20% reduction in funding.

One of the parents who works for a bank did a little calculation about what that would mean for one of the schools my kids go to, Dovercourt. With a 20% cut in funding for Dovercourt, which is what is anticipated if Bill 104 goes through, we would lose 50% of our maintenance money; 20% of our lunch supervision; 20% of our curriculum — that means field trips, library material, heritage language programs; 50% off the office staff and/or the caretaking staff — that's in addition to the actual maintenance costs; and the removal of education assistants from the kindergarten or for the special education programs. This is a huge blow and this is not even half of the cuts that would be required for a 20% cut.

The Chair: Ms Endicott, I would ask you to wrap up. Ms Endicott: Essentially, in order to address the rest of the cuts, we would have to get into actual staffing.

Why is this happening? Why are these cuts happening? It's to have a tax break. I would like to say clearly as a citizen of Ontario that I never asked for a tax break. I don't know anybody who wanted a tax break. This so-called desire for a tax break the government is promoting is costing me more out of my pocket.

I am getting so many pleas through the mail, over the phone while I'm cooking supper every night from charities that have had their funding cut, asking for money from me. More and more street people — I have to put my hand in my pocket and give them money. My child comes home more and more often with things that have to be sold to raise money for the school for just the basics, computers, the lunch program, whatever.

The sale of these things has the criterion that they aren't to go door to door. So who buys them? I do. I didn't come with a submission today. I don't have a paper, but I came with a different submission. My child came home with his usual things to sell. I couldn't buy them all. I took them to work. My co-workers couldn't buy them because they have their kids and they're buying them all too.

My submission to the government members: They're \$2 each. Would you like to support Dovercourt school?

Interruption.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, for those of you who are new to the committee, we don't allow that kind of outburst. Thank you for your cooperation. Thank you very much, Ms Endicott.

Ms Endicott: I'll be here for 15 minutes.

The Chair: Perhaps you'll be able to collect your money. Thank you very much for your presentation.

Mrs Johns: I'd like to comment on a point of personal privilege. In my school, where my children go, we've been selling chocolate bars for a number of years and we buy them in our house too.

Ms Endicott: I'm sure you do.

The Chair: Thank you for that comment. It's not, however, a point of personal privilege.

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## CHRISTINE TILE

The Chair: Could I ask Christine Tile to come forward. Thank you very much, Ms Tile, for being here this afternoon and thank you too for your patience.

Mrs Christine Tile: I've come before you this afternoon because I have some real concerns about Bill 104. My name is Christine Tile. My husband and I have three children. Two are currently in the public school system and hopefully, if we maintain JK, next year we'll have three.

Our children go to Allenby Public School. They are both in the French immersion system. I work full-time as a mother and am also the co-president of the Allenby Parents' Association. I've come before you as a representative of my school, but primarily I am here for my children, specifically the future of my children's education.

I strongly believe in the public school system. I think it's important for children to attend local schools, to be able to walk to school, make neighbourhood friends, grow up establishing close ties within their community. It teaches them that the world is made up of many different people and it gives them the skills of learning to deal with all these sorts of people.

As president of my children's school association, I get reams and reams of information across my desk and I've been given the opportunity to wade through many documents from all sorts of various groups re Bill 104. Early in the school year the parent body became concerned with the proposed cutbacks. We were then mandated by the parent body to ensure this was one of our priorities. One of our starting points was to contact our local MPP, Bill Saunderson. We met with him, discussed our concerns and priorities and hence invited him to our school for an information-sharing night, a question and answer forum.

He came. He brought a representative from the Ministry of Education. I'm proud that from our school only there were close to 250 parents in attendance out of almost 425. Additionally, all but two teachers showed up. Mr Saunderson gave a prepared speech and was able to answer many questions. Our parents asked sophisticated and informed questions about education reform.

This is how I got to this point where I am now. The best way to start is by saying that there are some things in this bill that I do agree with. Mr Snobelen in his speech of January says these reforms will provide for a better quality of education, reduce duplication and waste by streamlining administration and bureaucracy, focus

resources in the classroom and enhance performance of our students, all this while still saving us taxes. What could possibly be wrong with this? I would love to save taxes and I want the best education for my children. What parent doesn't? However, I am not convinced the Fewer School Boards Act, as presented, will achieve this end. I'm afraid for the future of my children's education.

Let me start with the Education Improvement Commission. From all my reading it seems that the EIC will have sweeping powers over education to make decisions about all aspects of Ontario's education system, including budget cuts, curriculum, hiring policies, junior kindergarten, library, special education, etc. They are appointed by the government and they are not accountable to me.

How will I be assured they will be working in my children's best interests when they are appointed, not elected, and their real mandate, I suspect, is to reduce taxes under the guise of education improvement? They will have the power to make all the changes they want with no local control and possibly little insight into local needs.

I am not a lawyer, nor am I am accustomed to reading through government bills. Poring through this bill trying to understand what it means based on how it's been reformed from the Education Act is not an easy task. However, what I do get from this is that the EIC will have power over all assets and liabilities and can hire and fire and transfer at their whim. This is not acceptable.

The bill also states that the decisions of the Education Improvement Commission are final and shall not be reviewed or questioned by a court. Does this not say then that this body is above the law? Who will they then be accountable to? Is this not unconstitutional? There's no debate, no discussion, no recourse? This sounds very dictatorial to me.

This gives the EIC unprecedented autocratic powers. Should they really be immune to any liability? Are the boards of directors of major companies not liable for their decisions?

I'm afraid of what the bill refers to as "outsourcing of non-instructional services." What is the true definition of this? Does this mean that the maintenance staff will be contracted out? In our school, the children know and trust the custodians, they can ask them questions and often ask them for help. They even know their names. Bringing in outside, contracted maintenance staff poses additional security risks in our schools and to my children. Just another safety concern, and there have been too many of them lately.

The children are taught that if they see a stranger in the school they are to report it to the office immediately. But if that person is wearing the same uniform as the other custodians, is this really a stranger? How does this person fit into my school? The thought process of a child is very interesting. Are we inviting trouble by doing this? The school belongs to the children. It has to be a safe and friendly environment in order for them to learn efficiently and effectively.

Is outsourcing going to include the principal, the gym teacher, the librarian, special education? These are not outlined in the bill. This is what is suggested, but not detailed. These services are of paramount importance to my children. It is one of the reasons we chose the public school system. They would have a qualified phys ed specialist and special education resources. Luckily we have not had to rely on this and hopefully we won't, but many children in the school sincerely benefit from this essential service. We need to provide the basics at an early age to special education children in order to give them self-esteem, self-worth, some quality of life.

The other alternative is that down the road we will be paying for them through social welfare services. I suggest investing in these children now, rather than paying for

them later.

We are also lucky enough to have a playground and grassy areas at Allenby to allow for much-needed outside play at recess and at lunchtime, educational assistants who are essential, especially in the French immersion system when children can sometimes get frustrated learning in a different language, and a real librarian to run their resource centre, and what is more important to teach our children but to read? I know you agree with that because you focus on that in your bill: reading, writing, spelling, grammar, math, science, geography, technology and Canadian history.

Let's talk about the definition of the classroom. What is your government's real definition of the classroom? Mike Harris has promised not to make cuts to the classroom. I have concerns that your definition of the classroom may be different than mine. My classroom includes supplies, ed assistants, reading centres, library, phys ed, special education, reading clinics. In my opinion, any cuts

will hurt the classroom.

I have information from an Ernst and Young study, the estimate of cost savings resulting from school board government changes produced for your government, which suggests that \$9.9 million will be taken out of classroom supplies and equipment. From where I sit this is making cuts directly in the classroom. Who will pick up the slack when my children don't have textbooks to learn from or workbooks to use? The fundamentals you so emphasize cannot be taught without resource materials.

Let's talk about the school council. I am very involved with my parents' association; I am the co-president. I have made a two-year commitment. My motive for becoming involved in their school was that this was public school and I wanted to have a better sense of what

was really going on.

There are two issues here. My suspicion is that the government wants the PTAs to have a much bigger role than they currently do.

First, it's very hard to get parents to volunteer, even when they are not accountable for their actions. How will you get them to volunteer when they are directly responsible for specific elements at the school?

Second, are parents really qualified to take on these tasks? Who's going to monitor these actions or whims? What kind of consistency will there be between neighbourhood schools? Who determines the fundamental philosophy of each school?

In summary, my primary concerns are the fine points not outlined in the bill such as the real definition of the classroom. What is really outsourcing? What is defined as a non-instructional service? What is the real reason for wanting more involvement from school councils? Why does the Education Improvement Commission seem to have such sweeping powers and why is it above the law?

Who is accountable to me on a local level? What is the funding model for the classroom? Why are these changes being pushed through the system so quickly? Believe me, I'd love to save money on our taxes but not at the expense of my children's education. Can you assure me that these cuts can be made without hurting my children's education? Slow down. Listen to and answer these concerns. Thank you for your time.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs Tile. We appreciate your being here. You've used up all your time.

1700

# TOM CHARETTE

The Chair: Tom Charette is next. Thank you for coming, Mr Charette.

Mr Tom Charette: I'm a member of the local taxpayers coalition, the Taxpayer Coalition Niagara. I am head of membership recruiting for the Ontario division of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. The Taxpayer Coalition Niagara will be making a written submission to you in another week, and Paul Pagnuelo of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation has already appeared before this committee.

I'm appearing here today as a private citizen, however, on behalf of my six-month-old and five-year-old grandsons. I want the best possible education for these two children, and I think that Bill 104 is a good first step towards getting it.

I'm a former teacher at Western tech and commerce here in Toronto and at St Clair College in Windsor. Of my six siblings, four are teachers. My parents started one of the first Montessori schools in the province in the early 1970s, a school that exists to this day. I'm kind of steeped in education.

I endorse Bill 104 and what it attempts to do. My personal experience as a member of the local taxpayer coalition is that school boards are generally unresponsive to taxpayer concerns about the quality, cost and content of education. I am sure that in every board there are individual trustees who are exceptions to this statement. There certainly are such exceptions in Niagara. On balance, however, they are captives of the school board bureaucracies and the teachers' unions. They don't know how to approach and get a handle on their operations, analyse them. When they are asked to do it, forced to do it, they don't know what to do with the results. That's been our experience.

You'll be getting a submission from the Taxpayer Coalition Niagara, as I mentioned. It will show that as a result of a request for information by the coalition, the Niagara South board recently discovered that its cost per student was \$28,000 a year at Niagara Falls Secondary School and \$20,400 a year at Welland High School compared to \$7,200 a year at Centennial school. The difference and the problem with the two high-cost schools was simply declining enrolments.

The board was astonished when they got the report. We were there. Their reaction told everything. They simply didn't know what was going on and hadn't asked one of the most basic questions you would think a school board would ask.

If the Niagara South board repeats the recent experience of our Lincoln county board in dealing with the problem of half-full schools, they will spend the next year discussing, reviewing, consulting stakeholders, holding hearings, and in the end they will decide not to make a decision. Pleas for delays are often delays for simple inaction.

I have four specific suggestions re the implementation of Bill 104:

(1) I would urge you to be as understanding of and communicative with individual teachers as you can be. Don't confuse them with their unions and the entrenched school board bureaucracies. There are thousands of dedicated, hardworking teachers in this province.

(2) Be as tough as you have to be with the unions and the school boards.

(3) Make sure that in the process of amalgamating boards, the combined boards don't gravitate towards (a) the highest salaries and benefits; (b) the least efficient work practices; (c) the lowest performance standards; (d) the highest service levels.

(4) Get politics out of the classroom.

At a recent social function I attended, an individual who turned out to be an official with one of the teachers' unions began criticizing corporations for not being willing to pay their fair share of taxes to support education and social programs generally.

I asked him what rate of taxes companies paid and what he would consider a fair rate for them to pay. He said he wouldn't get trapped into discussing numbers. He said corporate profits were too high, there were too many loopholes and generally everyone in Canada knew they were shortchanging the rest of us.

He didn't know, or refused to say, how much money companies made in dollars or how many dollars they paid in taxes. He refused my offer to get him the information which, by the way, I had just obtained off the Internet in the form of a tax fairness document that accompanied last week's federal budget.

I asked him — and to be candid with you, I was now at this point pulling his chain — if this wasn't the kind of information Earl Manners had in mind for communicating to students during his proposed teach-in day. He indicated they had all the information students need already.

This individual didn't know the facts, and he didn't want to know the facts. This is the height of irresponsibility, especially when teachers' unions continually attempt to pull the mantle of defenders of the greater good of society over their shoulders. If we are going to allow discussion of these issues in our classrooms, we had better make sure the discussions are based on accurate facts.

Ontario's classrooms are being used for narrow, selfish, political purposes. With all due respect, you good folks better put an end to that before the very idea of a publicly funded education system falls into irreversible disrepute, and we are disturbingly close to that now. Thank you very much.

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The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Charette. We have three minutes left, one minute per caucus. I ask you to keep your questions short. We begin with the official

opposition.

Mr Duncan: Mr Charette, there's been a lot of research done in the United States by taxpayer-oriented groups that indicates that elected boards on a smaller scale than larger boards are more efficient and pass on not only better education but better administration of public education. How would you reconcile the research done in the United States with what's planned in Bill 104?

Mr Charette: I would generally endorse that if you

would allow citizens to vote on mill rates.

Mr Duncan: In most of those jurisdictions, they don't have a vote on the mill rate. What I'm saying is that a number of taxpayer-oriented groups in the United States have openly endorsed smaller boards, not larger boards, with greater local control by an elected body that's accountable. How, in your view, do larger boards, with larger bureaucracies, serving more people — it's the old argument of diminishing marginal returns. Your brother has spoken eloquently about those and other issues. How do you reconcile those two concepts?

Mr Charette: I'm looking at it strictly from a local taxpayer coalition group's viewpoint. We've got four boards in our area to be concerned with. We've got about 50 sets of ears that are subject to all kinds of special

pleading.

Mr Duncan: But back to the question of diminishing marginal returns, how do you reconcile that?

Mr Charette: I would deny that on the scale we're talking about in Niagara there will be any diminishing

Mr Wildman: I found your presentation interesting. I come from a different type of area than the area you're from. I represent Algoma, which up until now has been the fourth-largest constituency in Ontario, geographically. It's going to be doubled after the next election, thanks to these guys, and it will remain one of the largest in Ontario.

What is proposed in this bill for my area is that all of the public boards and all of the separate boards in Algoma district, which is approximately 400 miles from one end to the other, will be amalgamated into two boards, a public board and a separate board. Do you think it's going to be possible, in that kind of a scenario, for local communities to have control over their schools and the education of the students in those schools?

Mr Charette: I simply can't answer that, Mr Wildman. I don't know enough.

Mr Wildman: It may have been an unfair question.

Mr Charette: Yes.

**Mr Wildman:** We have a concern that it may take approximately four or five hours just to drive to a meeting.

**Mr** Charette: I can only say this: I have attended, as a taxpayer coalition member, probably 50 school board meetings, and in all honesty, sir, a lot of the discussion that goes on is just not productive.

Mr Wildman: Then is it your view we should do away with boards?

**Mr Charette:** I'm just saying that there's probably room for less talk and more action. That's as a person who has attended many meetings.

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): Thank you, Mr Charette. Good to see you again. I salute the recent work of the taxpayer coalition in investigating the spending of the Niagara South board. As you and I both know, their spending had gone up over 100% in the last 10 years with a zero increase in enrolment, and for most of those years transfers in the province were increasing, but they still hiked the property tax on the backs of seniors.

We've heard today in this committee some concerns that if boards pay \$5,000 or less or make their trustees volunteer, that will somehow attract a low-quality individual or somebody who doesn't care about education. What are your feelings on the roles of trustees under the

system spelled out in Bill 104?

Mr Charette: I think we may hopefully see a return to the days when it was more of a true quasi volunteer. I don't think those jobs should be careers or should be full-time or near full-time in their payment. When you look at what they do when they meet and the kinds of matters they discuss, I think a quasi volunteer, which I would classify in this day and age as somebody who is getting about \$5,000 a year, would be sufficient to attract a committed individual.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Charette, and thank you for coming such a long way to be with us today.

#### SCHUSTER GINDIN

The Chair: Ms Schuster Gindin. Welcome. Thank you for being here. You have 10 minutes. It will go very quickly.

Ms Schuster Gindin: Apparently so. I come here as a parent of the Toronto public school board, and I have many of the same issues and concerns I've heard other parents address this afternoon. I have two children in the board, and I've been involved since they began day care. Until that time, I had never really been involved in local politics, and I think that's often the case, but as my children become involved. I do through the last 15 years of involvement I have come to appreciate the way that the Toronto board has responded to its communities and constituents' concerns and modelled its way of operating in order to allow the largest amount of local input possible.

I know that the northern boards are very different. There are different issues, of distance, of busing. All I know about that is that it's different, that they should organize themselves in a way that actually suits their constituency. The way Toronto has organized its board and its allowing of parental input depends on full-time trustees who are paid a living wage so they can actually do the work we need them to do.

I was the chair of my kids' day care, and it took me a year or so to learn how to figure out the budget, what sorts of things are of concern to running day cares. Now my kids are older. I don't have any input in day cares any more, and other parents now have to learn the same

things over. There's not a transference of skills. I was also a co-chair of the PTA in my kids' elementary school.

Not everyone has the skills, confidence or time to be able to be involved, even though everyone wants the best for their kids and their communities. Without the assistance of trustees who represent parents, who are elected by parents, who actually have to be responsible for their decisions, it takes much longer to become involved, and

many people can't ever become involved.

The thing I learned from my experience is how diverse my community is, by being involved in my kids' school. This is where we live, in an incredibly diverse urban environment. This is where my kids grow up and have to learn not just how to get a job, although of course it's important, not just the reading and writing that schools are there for, but how to be citizens, how to get along with each other. That's what parents learn by being involved in their kids' education: how to help that, facilitate that, help teachers help that and have some input into it. What I learned is that my community is much more diverse than I ever imagined and about all the people I don't know and what's of concern to them.

It's important that we have federal or provincial standards of education, what everyone should be expected to be taught, but how they learn it depends on where they come from and where they live. The only way of finding out how to really effectively service those kids, address that curriculum, is by having a dialogue, some input locally. The point of a dialogue about the standards between the people who teach them and the community that can talk about how its children might learn best—it's a circle, and you don't solve it by cutting out one half of the dialogue. Without those full-time trustees, the number of parents that can be involved will be greatly reduced. You can't depend on volunteers. A lot of people can't volunteer, and \$5,000 as a salary is basically asking for volunteers in Toronto.

As a co-chair of a PTA, I know that I was not representative of anybody. Just because I'm a parent and other people also have children doesn't mean we're all the same. We all want the best for our kids, and we might want opposite things. My kids don't need ESL, but they need to be in a classroom with kids who can also communicate. We don't need to be separated.

The real implication of taking away the instrument allowing us all to come together as a community, to benefit from our diversity, taking away full-time trustees, is that it will be completely divisive. Some people will never be able to be involved at all. They'll become invisible. Just because they're not at a meeting doesn't mean their kids' needs don't need to be addressed or that all of us won't suffer the consequences of it.

I don't think we can expect volunteers or people — it isn't our job to know everything about our community or to have the kind of experience that continues on. It will only be divisive. We can't be expected to represent everybody. That's what elections are about. Elected officials represent people. What concerns me about Bill 104 is that the Toronto system will really suffer. That's the system I'm familiar with. Without full-time, decently paid trustees, we won't get the kind of community input that makes our system the good system it is.

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much for your presentation. Obviously you speak with some passion and concern about the education of kids, and your kids in particular. I get the impression that you would consider that your children have had a good opportunity to gain a well-rounded education.

Ms Gindin: Excellent.

Mr Wildman: It has been suggested that the organization of school boards really wouldn't affect that; that is, if you have a larger board, even 310,000 students, which is by far the largest board probably in North America, and with 22 trustees, you're still going to be able to have the involvement in your school and your kids' education and they will be able to get the kind of education you value, that organization isn't that important. How do you react to that?

Ms Gindin: I know that my kids will get a good education no matter what because, first of all, if I had to remove them from the public board, I could probably afford to, although they have never gone to school further than four blocks from their house, which is an important

community value that we hold in our family.

Mr Wildman: No, I didn't mean by removing them. Ms Gindin: I know. Even within the school, I'm really involved, and there are certain programs they will lose, but I think the quality of their education will be diminished because the general quality of education will go down. They can't learn as well in a community where everybody's needs aren't served. I don't think they're individual; it's public.

Mr Carroll: I have just a quick question on the trustee thing. I'm sure you're aware that all of the hospitals in the city of Toronto and in fact everywhere in the province are run with volunteer boards of directors. You, obviously as a person who is very interested in what's happening, volunteered to be on the board of your children's day care centre. Would you run for election to a school board?

Ms Gindin: I wouldn't, because I have other work to do. But the trustees we have serving our board now are people who have developed their skills and interests in that field and who do that as a more-than-full-time job.

Mr Carroll: A board of education has an enormous administrative group of people to do those things. Do you not believe that some part-time board members operating because they want to help, like they have in hospitals and so on, could also serve us very well?

Ms Gindin: Not in Toronto; it's too diverse. I couldn't possibly, in the time. I mean, it's a totally volunteer thing, obviously, \$5,000. It would mean spending day and night. There are 50 languages; when we put out, as a PTA, the newsletter for our school, just the translation services, I can't begin to address the needs of those communities without a lot of direct involvement. They don't come to the school. You have to go to them. Not everyone can come. That's a full-time job.

Mr Wildman: I didn't realize you had so much confidence in bureaucrats that you'd like to leave it to the bureaucrats.

The Chair: Mr Wildman, please.
Mr Carroll: I didn't say that, Mr Wildman.

Mr Bartolucci: I only have one question for you, Ms Gindin. I guess you're concerned, as we are, that in comparison with the United States, Ontario ranks in 45th place in class size. I'm just asking for your opinion. If Bill 104 were to come to pass, do you feel that class sizes in Ontario would grow or would they become more manageable and offer more availability for excellence in education because of workable numbers?

Ms Gindin: I think the rhetoric around excellence is because everyone believes in excellence. Who would say, "No, we want mediocre"? If you cut money, you cut — obviously, I see it already in schools, just in anticipation trying to save money, and there's no place to save it from. If you don't want to pay professional teachers, well, you can save money, but who needs that? If you don't spend more money, you're only going to have less. Anyone who goes shopping or anything else knows that.

Mr Bartolucci: So you see class sizes growing,

correct?

Ms Gindin: Of course I do.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Gindin, for

coming here today.

Mrs Johns: While the next presenter is coming up, I'd just like to comment that I forgot to pay my \$2; it's sitting here. I don't want to be treated like a criminal. I will mail it to Ms Endicott.

The Chair: I've actually been envying the fact that you've been eating a chocolate bar. Some of us didn't get a chance to buy any.

Mrs Johns: I'm not sure some of the members would have sold it to you, Chair.

# PAM PETROPOULOS KELLY ROBINS

The Chair: Pam Petropoulos and Kelly Robins? Thank you very much for appearing before the committee today. You have 10 minutes for your presentation. You can use it in any way you wish.

Ms Pam Petropoulos: Good afternoon. My name is Pam Petropoulos, and I'm a teacher at the Scarborough Centre for Alternative Studies, which is the adult education centre in Scarborough. I have 15 years of experience with the Scarborough Board of Education, the last seven years being at the Scarborough Centre for Alternative Studies.

I'm here today as an advocate for adult high school students and for fully funded adult education programs. Adult education programs play an invaluable role in helping unemployed or marginally employed adults who lack a high school diploma and marketable skills obtain a fighting chance in a very competitive global economy. Unfortunately, however, these programs are in serious danger of being curtailed or eliminated altogether as a result of recent and proposed legislation.

Last year Bill 34 reduced the provincial grant level for students over the age of 20 to less than half the provincial grant level for adolescents. Boards outside of Metro, which depend on provincial grants, have seen their adult programs decimated. A study of 15 boards that tried to continue their adult programs with the new grant structure showed an 85% decline in enrolment. Bill 104, which

establishes provincial control of funding for education, would create a similar situation for adult education in Metro, where the training needs are much more acute.

Adult education programs serve students who are disadvantaged in numerous ways and face multiple barriers to permanent employment. For example, more than 60% of the students at the Scarborough Centre for Alternative Studies receive social assistance and 73% have incomes of less than \$1,500 a month. Many of these individuals are single mothers. Across the province, adult programs see twice the provincial average of students with disabilities, and in Metro, English-language needs parallel the profile in adolescent programs, where one third of students have been in the country for less than four years. Adult programs target students with the greatest needs and they quickly and successfully prepare graduates for work or further training.

At SCAS, more than half our students obtain their high school diplomas in less than a year. A survey of our 1996 graduates shows that six months after graduation 76% were either working or obtaining further training. The best way to demonstrate the value of programs like ours is to meet our students and graduates. I would now like to introduce you to one of our graduates, Kelly Robins.

Ms Kelly Robins: Good evening, honourable members of Parliament. My name is Kelly Robins. June 10, 1997, marks an important milestone in my life. This is the day that I will be graduating from York University with a bachelor of arts degree in psychology and a bachelor of education degree in the primary-junior division, with an emphasis on special education. This has been a long and challenging process for me which began in 1989.

Finding myself newly divorced with two small children made me face the reality that I was on my own and needed to provide for my family. Without a high school diploma, no marketable skills and no prospects for meaningful employment, I began to feel as though I would never break away from social assistance as my

only means of support.

I was fortunate enough to be directed to the Scarborough Centre for Alternative Studies, SCAS. Invited to attend the orientation session, I arrived on the doorstep of SCAS with my children in tow. Immediately I was made to feel welcome, as a staff member helped me to the second floor and assured me that it was okay that my three-year-old, who has autism, was screaming. After the session was over, the principal, Ed Moran, personally took me on a tour of the facility and introduced me to the onsite day care staff.

Before I registered for classes, I was provided with individual counselling which took me through the process of determining which requirements I needed to fulfil to obtain my secondary school diploma. The staff member who assisted me with this took the time to help me choose the courses which would benefit my situation most. As it turned out, I would only be required to attend classes for one semester to graduate. This was the ultimate situation: In a short time I would be the proud owner of a high school diploma.

Getting to classes daily proved to be an obstacle in itself, but I found that I wanted to be there and that for

the first time in a very long time I was doing something productive with my life. I soon began to realize that the staff at SCAS was genuinely interested in what was happening in my life and made every effort, on their own time, to support me in overcoming the many crises I faced on a daily basis.

I felt safe at SCAS. This was a place where I belonged. If I had to take courses at night or at an adolescent high school, I really don't think I would have persevered because I didn't fit in there. Not only were the staff supportive of me, but other students who were in situations similar to mine provided me with a network of

support and encouragement.

The staff at SCAS believed in my abilities even if I didn't. It was here that I finally knew I was smart and that my contributions to class discussions were not only useful but valued. I soon began to realize that I was just as good as anyone else and that I had something to offer, that I wouldn't always be a burden on the social structure.

Part of my curriculum was a career directions course. To be successful, I had to put a career path in place for myself. This proved invaluable because I had no idea about what course of action I would take upon graduation. With the help of many staff members, guidance counsellors and a social worker included, I learned how to set realistic and achievable goals. Interests and abilities were assessed through a series of tests, which set me on a course of action. Also included in this course was the job search process. Valuable résumé-writing and interview skills were learned, which to this day I am still implementing.

It was at this time that I knew becoming a teacher was possible. With the guidance of caring staff members and my self-esteem now intact, this was the direction I was headed. The time line I set to reach this goal was realistic, given my situation, and I must add, I have attained it.

Apart from the academia, SCAS staff were always there for me when I needed them most. There have been many times when I could have just packed it in. Attempting to maintain a somewhat normal life was not, and still isn't, easy. It is because of the committed staff who to this date still provide me with the support and encouragement I need that I am here today speaking to you. Without their help in opening the doors that I had foolishly closed in my teenage years, June 10, 1997, would be just another day to me. Instead, it marks the beginning of a new life not only for myself but also for my children. I am now in a position to be a positive role model for them as well as for the students I will teach in the many years to come. I am extremely proud to be able to refer to the individuals who empowered me as my colleagues. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for being here today. If I may say, Ms Robins, on behalf of the committee, we applaud your determination and wish you all the best in the future. Thank you both very much.

Ms Petropoulos: Is the time up?

The Chair: Yes, I'm sorry. You used your time up very effectively.

1730

## SANJAY DHEBAR

The Chair: I ask Sanjay Dhebar to come forward. Mr Dhebar, thank you very much for being here this afternoon. You have 10 minutes for your presentation.

Mr Sanjay Dhebar: Good evening, members. Thank you for this opportunity to speak here. Everyone seems to focus on the democratic aspect. It's pretty democratic for me.

My name is Sanjay. I'm a full-time student at Ryerson Polytechnic University, and I'm currently an elected mamber of the board of directors.

member of the board of directors.

I'm here to speak for Bill 104, and I'd like to thank the Conservative government for finally addressing a much-needed reform to education. The Common Sense Revolution clearly indicated its intent to get rid of red tape and intense bureaucracy, and I definitely feel that

this is an indication of getting rid of it.

In 1989 I attended a small public school in Prince Edward county, just outside of Belleville. There were only two visible minorities at my school; one was me and the other one was my older brother. We were both very active students and national-calibre athletes at that time, as well as academically honour students and student council members. Both my brother and I were forced to attend another school in another board to finish our schooling. The reason for this was due to the intense racism from the teachers, the principals and the school board itself. We were forced to commute to a school 45 minutes away at our own expense.

I'm not here to complain about this, because eventually we succeeded at our own pace, but I'm here today to say it's about time. Obviously, the local board did not address my problem with racism. I think Bill 104 will help to eliminate local biases existing in my local board by

bringing in other perspectives.

One thing I felt was failed at, growing up in the public school system, was emphasizing French and the importance of French, living in this country. Bill 104 clearly states that right now there are only two French boards in Ontario, and although they are reducing the amount of school boards, there will be an increase of two more, to four French boards. I really appreciate that.

I really wish my parents had an opportunity to give their input, as each level of bureaucracy failed, from the teachers to the principals to the board, to address the

racism my brother and I had to endure.

According to the Ontario College of Teachers, the average age of teachers in Ontario is 46. Those teachers, principals and the board of education are still in the education system right now, the same individuals that my brother and I had to endure. I feel assured that the Conservative government is taking action against these teachers who are old and set in their ways and unable to change.

Margaret Gee, president of the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, brought something to my attention. Margaret Gee said, "With science and technology, the curriculum should be up to date, since it's over 10 years old." She added that she has been waiting

for the new science curriculum from the education minister for over 10 years. If I calculate that correctly, in the last 10 years Liberal and NDP governments were in power and failed to present this curriculum to the teachers.

The former Minister of Education, David Cooke, resigned from the NDP to focus on education reform presented by the Conservative government. At this time, I'd like to thank the NDP for allowing us to have Mr Cooke. This much respected, long-standing provincial member of Parliament has a clear understanding of the much-needed change in education, something he obviously was unable to do during his reign as Minister of Education.

Ontario's maximum salary level for teachers is \$63,353, 24% above the \$51,123 maximum in the other nine provinces. The minimum-experience salary is 11% more than the other nine provinces. Since 1984 Ontario's maximum salary has increased by 9% while the average of the other nine provinces has decreased by 4.2%. I guess in Parliament they'd say "shame" to this kind of situation. I'm a little confused here. Ontario is ranked last as far as education goes, so why the pay raises? I don't understand.

On the weekend I read an article saying how Quebec plans on having a large reform to their education system also. They plan on doing it similarly to the Conservative

government in what's going on right now.

One thing I'd like to focus on from my university's perspective, which relates to Bill 104, is that my university board of directors recently started a new program. Although I'm happy to be one of integral parts at the start of this program, I feel shame that it's something that has been going on. It's called Students for Literacy. It's something that's available to all university students who seem to have a problem as far as literacy goes. It was initially started in the fall semester at Ryerson and it's had tremendous success as far as enrolment goes. Although I'm glad to see this occurring, it just makes me demoralized when I think of our education system, to think of the kind of teachers we have who are unable to teach students who get into university proper reading and writing skills.

From the university perspective, when I spoke to my president, Dr Claude Lajeunesse, he said the problem right now with university students is that the high schools are not providing them with literate students. Business is saying the universities are not providing them with literate reading-and-writing-skilled students. I don't know which side to work with, but from both sides it doesn't

seem to be balanced.

The unions, which seem to have the highest representation and the largest amount of money to help support this cause, have failed to give any alternative. This disappoints me, because although I'm not highly supportive of unions, I think they sometimes get their point across, and I wish they would do it from an education perspective.

In the end, I'd like to just say that I look forward to the day when my child is in a classroom and is able to learn from a young teacher, preferably an ethnic minority, but who also has a computer by his side to be consistent with the current technology being offered to the students. Now I wish to listen to some of the questions the members have.

Mr Wildman: Thank you for your presentation. You said at one point that you were confused. I think your presentation may have demonstrated that, but it certainly confused me. I really regret the experience you describe of you and your brother and your family with racism, but I really don't understand, and I've tried to glean from your remarks, how Bill 104 addresses that.

You said it gets at the bureaucracy, but the minister has said that out of a total expenditure of over \$13 billion a year on education, the savings from this legislation is \$150 million. That's a lot of money, but it's about 1%. The only bureaucracy being eliminated by this bill is cutting the number of trustees from about 1,900 to about 800. I don't understand how the issue of racism is addressed or even how bureaucracy is addressed under this bill.

1740

**Mr Dhebar:** I still remember when I sat down with the council and I addressed my presentation, it was quite similar to what you said; they said they were confused themselves.

To answer your question, I find the bureaucracy is going to be gotten rid of it by decreasing the amount. To be honest with you, I don't think we need school trustees. Parents, unlike past members who have spoken, are educated enough to give their input, and with having more parents' input, which Bill 104 will allow, therefore a representation from ethnic minorities will be addressed. Therefore, with Bill 104 decreasing the amount of bureaucracy, which I think is decreasing because there are going to be fewer school trustees, and a wider board to address these concerns, that's why I mentioned that.

Mr Hudak: Thank you, sir, for your presentation. Unlike Mr Wildman, I enjoyed your presentation. I didn't think it was confused in any way. In fact, it came from your heart. You took time out of your day, free of charge, to come before this committee and give your opinion on how you think the education system will work — very well done, and you don't get paid \$75,000 a year to be a professional speaker. Maybe it didn't live up to Mr Wildman's expectations, but I thought you did a good job.

Mr Dhebar: Thank you.

Mr Wildman: No, I was just trying to find out how — The Chair: Order, please. Let's not cut into the

presenter's time.

Mr Hudak: Some people we've had before the committee or members opposite have said that we should emulate the States, that we should spend as much money per student as the Americans and somehow that will improve our education system. But your point is that it's not throwing more money at it or more bureaucracy or more trustees or a bigger administration that's going to improve education. In fact, you said that reducing the bureaucracy and getting dollars into the classroom will help that. Is it about money and bureaucracy, or how do you improve the quality of education in Ontario?

**Mr Dhebar:** One thing I first looked at when it came to the revenue point of view is that in Ontario we spend the most money on our education, yet we have the worst

education system in Canada. That's what I read. As far as the financial aspect goes, we're addressing that by saying that we don't need to spend that money. From a bureaucracy point of view, by having more parents' input, which I think the majority of parents are for, it allows for a real-life, from-the-heart point of view, like mine; for parents to be involved and to be part of their education.

Mr Duncan: How much time do I have?

The Chair: We're just about over the time limit, so a quick question.

Mr Duncan: I just wanted to thank you for your presentation; though I don't agree with you, it's certainly a thoughtful presentation. Given that you're the president of the Ryerson Progressive Conservatives, it's certainly consistent with the party's position on this. I just wonder how you feel about your party distributing information with respect to your politics, having dossiers with respect to individuals and their politics who present before committees, prior to their making a presentation.

Mr Skarica: Point of order: It was presented to us in the government caucus, as you well know. It wasn't presented to you until you requested it.

Mr Duncan: Yes, but that's the question.

The Chair: Excuse me. That's really not a point of order.

**Mr Duncan:** I just wonder how you feel about your government gathering information about a presenter's politics prior to them appearing before a committee.

Mr Dhebar: I'm not sure I understand your question, but I appreciate you asking me that. Although I'm actually the founder of the Progressive Conservative Party on campus, I brought my friend with me who's the president of the Liberal Party on campus. I appreciate you asking me that question.

Mr Bartolucci: Sanjay, just before you leave, I think Mr French here can give you some accurate statistics with regard to educational spending in Ontario and our

ability to compete.

The Chair: We don't have any more time. Thank you very much, Mr Dhebar, for appearing before us.

# DOUGLAS JOLLIFFE

The Chair: Mr Jolliffe, thank you very much for coming here. Thank you for your patience.

Mr Douglas Jolliffe: That's all right. My submission's been written up and I think it was distributed to you. I'll

be reading from it, more or less.

My name is Doug Jolliffe and I'm a history teacher at Western Technical and Commercial School in Toronto, a large school with students from a wide variety of backgrounds. In my time at Western Tech, I have come to two surprising and happy conclusions about secondary school education in Ontario, unlike the previous: (1) The students are not nearly as unteachable as I had been led to believe before I got into high school teaching, and (2) what we are trying to do with public education in Ontario is unprecedented in history. I'm here today because I believe the changes proposed by Bill 104 seriously threaten what is truly remarkable about education in Ontario today.

The aspect of Bill 104 that worries me the most is the centralization of the decision-making process. This will

mean education will become dangerously susceptible to the many education plans that are being promoted by private interests around the continent. I believe these plans, all of which dismiss current curriculum and teaching practices as ineffective, are detrimental to public education. My experiences as a high school teacher for the last seven years, which I'll just go over briefly, have convinced me that public education, under threat from these plans, needs the protection provided by the current board structure.

When I made the decision to leave the academic world of Queen's University for high school teaching, many people tried to dissuade me. They said, "High school students these days are not the least bit interested in knowledge or ideas, especially in the field of history." The message at the faculty of education here in Toronto where I attended for a year, although they were more optimistic, did not differ significantly. Students today, we were told, cannot be taught sophisticated ideas and must instead be coached towards other objectives, such as increased self-esteem and a better understanding of so-called relevant issues. Teaching the humanities to students today, I was told, was ultimately pointless.

After beginning work, I tried to implement the strategies I had been taught. While they did not always fail, they did not seem to push the students to any great degree. Gradually, I became what is often called a traditional teacher, in that I would spend more and more time at the front of the classroom explaining history to the class. My students responded by showing me that they not only could grasp the essence of what I was teaching, even the difficult material, but that they wanted to learn more. By teaching material educational specialists said was irrelevant in a manner that they said was ineffective, my students nevertheless seemed to learn more.

The second conclusion I have reached since I began teaching high school is that public education in Ontario is a unique and difficult experiment. We are trying to provide a standard education to a far greater segment of the population than any other society has tried to do, now or in the past. Unlike other provinces, such as some of those we keep getting compared to, and other countries, the emphasis in Ontario is not just on the education but an opportunity for all people to gain a full and varied education, rather than simply dividing up the population at some early age according to perceived capability. In those systems, the good receive a traditional education, the bad get rudimentary skills training and the ugly get expelled.

To try to educate all citizens requires a balance between a strong and rigorous curriculum and intensive and individualized programs to retain the hard-to-teach. This is what public education has been in Ontario: an ongoing attempt to educate all in our society. The attempt so far, and it must be emphasized that it is an ongoing process, has not been without some mistakes, but the effort has been noted around the world. People from as far away as Asia and Europe have visited Ontario's schools in order to emulate what we are doing right.

Over the past few years, I have been making these points to people interested in education. I have pushed for

policy that reflects the fact that all students are capable not only of being trained for the economy but also of learning the values of the humanities, sciences and mathematics, values that have more to do with the way one thinks and behaves as a citizen than as an employee. I have talked with parents, students, and education officials about ways to improve the system, such as establishing a balance between job skills courses and the more traditional curriculum.

It has been in the process of these endeavours that I have come to realize the importance of local school board trustees. Too often the educational specialists, speaking from a position far removed from the classroom, have put forward programs that seem valuable in theory but are disastrous in practice. The most common example of these programs is called outcomes-based education, a system that many American states have implemented and then abandoned after considerable costs were incurred. Just three or four years ago, many Toronto board superintendents embraced OBE and were encouraging its establishment in schools here. Some trustees were interested because the system seemed to promise much. yet because of their elected positions the trustees also listened to and were persuaded by others who opposed the system. So far the OBE onslaught has been resisted

Without local trustees, it is difficult to see how this could have happened. Their elected status means they must confer before establishing policy. This, in turn, means our schools are better protected from some of the more dubious educational schemes. I have had many disagreements with trustees in the past, yet I have always found them to be approachable and willing to listen. I have been allowed to make deputations to committees and to the board itself, and I have made my opinions heard, as have many others who care about our schools. Trustees in Toronto have made extensive efforts in founding and safeguarding a strong curriculum and other programs that make our schools what they are: places of learning for all students.

It has been said that parent-run school councils established in Bill 104 would take over many of these duties. This is unlikely for a number of reasons. What these councils will lead to is an increasing disparity between schools. Some schools will have a large participation, resulting in that school having protection for its curriculum and programs. Other schools, for a variety of reasons, will have few people willing to take on the responsibility, which means these schools could easily come under the undue and pernicious influence of one or two

Public education needs and wants direct parent involvement because parents and citizens are required to protect the public interest. However, public interest is not served when parent involvement is on a piecemeal basis, as it would be when decisions are made only about each individual school. Instead, parent involvement committees at local boards should be given greater authority.

Public education will be put gravely at risk when local boards are eliminated and replaced by an unwieldy Metro board and an appointed Education Improvement Commission. These institutions, especially the part-timers in these institutions, will be so far removed from the realities of the classroom that they will be easy prey for the aforementioned educational plans currently being aggressively peddled. Members of the proposed trustee and commission structure may well have the best intentions but, because they will have neither the time nor perhaps the inclination to listen to all concerned parties, the public education experiment could well be damaged irreparably.

The current Toronto board structure provides the protection public education needs. The scope of responsibilities is large enough to ensure that no one school receives an unfair advantage and is small enough to listen and to learn from all who want to participate in the experiment. The arrangement proposed in Bill 104 offers neither.

Humans are fallible. Yet for the Education Improvement Commission, which Bill 104 states cannot be legally challenged, to work, its members will need to be infallible. This of course is impossible. Mistakes are made, and in public education mistakes are very costly. The adoption of a particular educational fad may mean nearilliteracy for the better part of a generation. A local trustee system is not perfect, but it is still better insurance against such mistakes.

This public education experiment in Ontario is a difficult enterprise, but the payoff is, and should continue to be, enormous. I implore you to please reconsider Bill 104. If it is implemented, all we have achieved in our schools up to now, and these achievements are tremendous, may well be lost and the great Ontario public education experiment will sadly come to an end.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Jolliffe. Regrettably, you used all your time and there won't be any time for questions, but thank you for your thoughts and for being here this evening.

#### GORDON GARLAND

The Chair: Gordon Garland, welcome to our committee. Thank you for being here.

Mr Gordon Garland: It's a pleasure to be here even if it's 40 minutes late.

The Chair: Our apologies.

Mr Garland: No problem. I'm a businessman, I'm a taxpayer and I'm also a parent. I have three daughters. Linnea is in Wychwood Tiger Daycare Centre and Hillcrest school. Alison is in grade 6 at Hillcrest school. Heather is in grade 10 at Oakwood Collegiate. I think I pretty well cover the whole spectrum of education from the informal to the formal.

I'm a city of York resident. I'm a member of York Fights Back, which is a coalition of community, labour, education and social justice groups and individuals. I'm also the co-chair of York Citizens for Local Democracy. For three years, I was the policy analyst with David Crombie's Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront, and prior to that a regional economist and housing analyst with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp.

I've got to say that I'm appearing here before this committee under protest. Ten minutes is totally inad-

equate for what I believe is the most massive change in both education and social services contemplated within

the last century within Ontario.

What I'd like to do is to set the general context for the changes being proposed, focus a little on the city of York and then conclude by drawing some links. In terms of general context, the issues of governance and property taxation have been dealt with in the Golden report, which was exclusive to the greater Toronto area. They've been dealt with in Libby Burnham's review of the Golden report. They've been dealt with in David Crombie's Who Does What panel review of Libby Burnham and the Golden report. In essence, we have reviewers reviewing the reviewers, and in the end we have a government making decisions that take none of this into account.

I'd like to quote from the submission to the Who Does What panel that was made by the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Toronto. It may very well provide some insights into why the province wants to take control of education. Here I'm quoting from a study that was done by the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, no doubt an eminent authority with respect to education. The Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago states, "Those reform efforts that constrain school funding from local sources while increasing funding from state sources have either lowered overall expenditure levels or slowed the growth in educational expenditures," because schools are "forced to compete with other state-wide programs for funding status."

Here I think we have the explanation of why this government has decided it wants to take control of education. It wants to take control of education to cut education funding. Let's look at what is being proposed here. Again I'm quoting from the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Toronto submission: "Per pupil elementary and secondary education spending in Ontario is \$6,297 in 1991. Per pupil elementary and secondary school education spending in Manitoba is \$6,120."

The difference between Manitoba and Ontario is only \$177 per student, Ontario being \$177 higher than Manitoba. Ontario also has a very large new immigrant population, which can account for a significant proportion

of that \$177 difference.

Ontario also happens to be the richest province in Canada, and people have voted through their school boards to give education a high priority. Education is a means of social advancement. It is the middle-class dream of progress. An attack on education is an attack on the middle class.

Having said that, I think it's useful to look at the ideological underpinnings of what this government is proposing. Essentially, it is that the public and the non-profit sectors are by definition wasteful; the corporate sector is by definition efficient; and voluntarism and charity will fill in the gaps. At this point in our history, the gaps are as wide as the San Andreas fault, and they're increasing. Voluntarism and charity cannot fill gaps that are that wide and have been allowed to grow at that rate.

What is being proposed by this government is, "How do we fund a tax cut?" There are three funding envelopes that you must slash if you are not to have your deficit rise totally out of control. Those three spending envelopes are health, education and social services. Let's take them

each in point.

With respect to health, what has this government done? Ontario's current course of closing hospitals and slashing their budgets at the same time is called "a second-rate plan that will cause untold harm to patients," and that's a quote from the head of the Ontario Hospital Association. He went on to note, "Queen's Park's plans to take \$1.3 billion out of hospital budgets over a three-year period and the government's current policy towards the restructuring of hospitals and the health system as a whole is flawed and must be fundamentally changed before irreparable damage is done." That is the head of the Ontario Hospital Association, going public for the first time, I might add.

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What did Mr Sinclair have to say? He is the government-appointed head of the hospital restructuring commission. He referred to the downloading of social services as "stupid." That's a one-word summary of what is

taking place with health care.

If we take a look at the other side of the coin, if we look at social services, what is being proposed through the government's agenda with respect to education is essentially to download social services on to cities. Why? So that taxes will increase dramatically and that, in response, municipalities will be forced to cut social services.

If we look at what's taking place under education, we see that duly elected school boards are being dismantled. The province is taking control of education. In the case of Metro Toronto, we have one mega school board for the six cities in Metro with more students than in six of Canada's provinces, ward boundaries almost tripled in size, and elected school trustees paid no more than \$5,000 a year. The result is unresponsive, corporate school trustees.

Let's look at what this government is doing and what its appointees and its recognized experts are saying. David Crombie says, "Wrong in principle, devastating in practice." Mel Lastman says: "It's a double whammy, two bullets to the head. We'll go broke." Hazel McCallion says: "Remember, when a government makes a mess, they don't go bankrupt like a private business; they just up the taxes. A megacity would become a costly mega-mess." Mega school boards will do the exact same thing.

The downloading is not an attempt to untangle bureaucracy or create efficiency or to establish clear lines of accountability. Consider child care, currently funded 80% by the province. The province wants municipalities to pay

50%. Who's accountable?

This government is attacking three sectors: health, education, and social and community services. No impact studies have been done in any of these sectors. The effects are going to be felt for the long term by the population, by the elderly, by children, by parents.

In the process, they are proposing to suspend democracy and to create appointed bodies that can make decisions that are not reviewable even by a court of law. I think as you travel the province you will quickly learn that hell hath no fury like that of parents protecting their children.

I say this to you candidly and without malice: I attended Mr Leach's presentation in Rosedale riding, and as Mr Leach tried to answer questions and got befuddled and mixed up and couldn't remember what the question was, someone ended up saying to him, "Al, you're not wearing any clothes and it's not a pretty sight," and it really wasn't. I was almost waiting for him to plead insanity in terms of his lack of response to questions.

Really, I think your position on these bills is essentially indefensible and that you will learn, as you go around the province, that parents are not going to stand for it. Parents are going to draw a line in the sand. It's them saying: "When you fuck with me, you fuck with my

children. Stop it."

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Garland, for your presentation. We can't allow that kind of unparliamentary language, but we do thank you. Unfortunately, we have no time for questions, but we appreciate your coming here and thank you for your patience.

I understand that Terry Tesan is not here. Is that

correct?

#### DOUGLAS HUM

The Chair: Will Doug Hum please come up? Thank you very much, Mr Hum, for being here. Welcome to the committee. You have 10 minutes to make your presentation.

Mr Douglas Hum: Thank you. I appreciate this opportunity to address the committee on Bill 104. I want to point out that I'm not in receipt of a \$75,000-a-year salary, nor am I paid to be here. I'm here voluntarily on my own time and as a parent, out of concern for the wellbeing of my two children who are in the Toronto Board of Education system. I am currently an executive member of the Toronto Chinese Parents Association and a past vice-president of the association, but I'm addressing you as a private individual.

My children are in grades 7 and 9. Both are doing well, one in French immersion and the other in a regular English-language program. My children have benefited greatly from the current school system, and as a parent I would not want to see changes that would diminish the quality of education they will receive. They have benefited from the diversity and choices in the curriculum which is enriching their lives and helping them develop

into well-rounded individuals.

The heritage or international language program available to my daughter who is in French immersion provides her with the choice to become trilingual if she so wishes. Skills in various languages will provide us with a future population that can communicate with the world. This is important to our country as a trading nation and particularly with the growing importance of the Pacific Rim nations. We need to be able to communicate to those nations in their various languages.

As a parent, I have greatly appreciated the accessibility of my local school board trustees and the timely manner in which they have responded to concerns regarding the education of my children. This accessibility owes itself to the fact that our Toronto Board of Education trustees are full-time and can thus devote their full attention to

concerns raised by their constituents. The remuneration they receive is reasonable for a full-time position. It is critically important to me as a parent, and to many parents I talk to, that this accessibility continue at current levels. By reducing the remuneration of trustees to that of occasional workers we may then wind up with occasional trustees.

Our children's education is too important to be left in the hands of occasional trustees. Setting remuneration at the proposed levels will be a barrier for those of low income to serve as trustees, leaving these positions to those who are financially well-off and who are not financially challenged. The new school board would then become a public body where those who are well-off will be disproportionately represented. The poor and the working poor will lose their voice. I would respectfully request the committee to develop plans to ensure inclusive representation and that the levels of remuneration be reviewed to ensure that it is not a barrier to those of low income.

I am concerned that the reduction in the number of trustees and the replacement of the six elected school boards with one Metro-wide board will further erode accessibility of trustees. I understand that the current levels of representation in the city of Toronto will rise from an average of 33,000 to 104,000 per trustee. Given the proposed level of remuneration, which reflects that of an occasional worker, and the barriers to equality of representation I have outlined, I may lose the accessibility to my trustees that I currently enjoy and greatly appreciate. I would respectfully request that the constituents represented by each trustee be reduced.

I am concerned about the establishment of the Education Improvement Commission. I understand that the commission members will be appointed by and report only to the Minister of Education, the Honourable Mr John Snobelen. The commission will have what I regard as extraordinary powers, including that of approving all expenditures exceeding \$50,000, and that decisions of the commission cannot be reviewed by any body, including the courts. This is undemocratic and opens the door for

abuse of power and authority.

I support the establishment of local school councils. In fact, I've served on a number of them. However, I fear that, as they are currently proposed, they can become undemocratic bodies representing only a small segment of the school population. The offloading of responsibilities previously held by trustees to unpaid volunteers, no matter how dedicated they may be, may leave parents with problems and issues that may not be addressed.

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I see those proposals as laying the foundation for a crisis in our education system. If implemented, they will make the Minister of Education's comments of a crisis self-fulfilling. I do not believe our education is in a crisis. It works reasonably well, and boards in the GTA are acclaimed internationally. I'm a product of that education system. I've come through its public school system, through its secondary school system. I've graduated from York University and from the University of Toronto, from the faculty of social work, with a master's degree in social work.

The education of our children is delicate and critical. Decisions made today will have a bearing on the wellbeing of our children tomorrow. Our education system, although is not without faults, works reasonably well and is not "broken," as the Minister of Education has proclaimed. I would respectfully request the committee to review the plans that have come forward and address the concerns raised by other deputants and reject the bill as it is currently constructed.

Mr Smith: Thank you for your presentation. You raised concerns with respect to the parent councils, and obviously there is an increased opportunity for the role of parent councils in education. What responsibilities should they have? Where would your comfort level be in terms of the responsibilities that could potentially be granted to

them?

Mr Hum: The kinds of workloads that are placed on them - and I'm very familiar because I've served on them; I'm past president of the Orde school parent council. The day-to-day operations of the school should be left in the hands of the principal, responsibility for the physical plant and the operations, curriculum etc. But the parents council can serve as liaison to other parents and bring concerns of the parents and help direct policy and help in the development of program. You have staff who are professionally trained who should be doing that kind of work, who should be charged with the responsibility of ensuring the quality of education.

Mr Bartolucci: Thank you very much for your presentation. When you find out that Ontario ranks, on a per pupil expenditure level, 46th in comparison to American and Canadian jurisdictions, does it make any sense at all to you, common or otherwise, that the government would want to institute two additional levels of bureaucracy, with the introduction of the Education Improvement Commission and the education improvement committees? You know that the two commission chairs are making \$88,000 each, and we're not sure what the remuneration will be for the other members. We don't know how many committees there'll be and we don't know what they'll get paid. Does it make any sense to you at all that this kind of money could be spent outside of the classroom as opposed to enhancing heritage language programs, international language programs and the creative arts?

Mr Hum: Certainly I agree with many of the points you raise. We have a current system that works reasonably well. There are adjustments that need to be made. But if you set up these infrastructures, they take very scarce resources away from the classroom situation. I would urge that such resources be directed to the classroom and

to critically needed programs.

Mr Martin: I want to thank you as well for coming and making some very good and valid points. I wanted to make a point and then ask a question. What I'm hearing re this bill and as justification for this bill is that somehow we're producing a mediocre product. You and I also obviously are products of the school system in Ontario, and I have four children who are going through it now.

I'm excited when I go home on the weekend and spend time with them, doing their homework and working

with them around some of the assignments and projects that they're doing. I certainly don't see what they're doing as mediocre, nor do I see them as mediocre. I see them as having a wonderful future ahead of them and I see them as being able to participate, because of the education system they're in, on an international scale, anywhere, second to nobody.

I was wondering - you may be out there more than I am — who is the government referring to when they speak of the system and its product being mediocre? I

don't know.

Mr Hum: My view of this is that they're pandering to misconceptions and misperceptions of what our education system is. These kinds of groups fail to recognize the achievements and the accomplishments of our education system. There are children who are coming out of the heritage language program who are doing very well in the third-language instruction courses. I have always lamented the fact that I've come through a system where I've had no access to a heritage language program and I cannot read and write in the Chinese language, where my daughter exceeds me in that.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Hum, for being

here. There is no more time for questions.

## SOO WONG

The Chair: Could I ask Soo Wong to come forward. Welcome, it's nice to have you here.

Ms Soo Wong: Thank you very much for this opportunity to speak to you. I know you're running late so I'm

going to be very quick.

My name is Soo Wong. I'm a public school trustee for the city of Toronto. I represent an area with the most school-aged children in the city of Toronto. Ward 8 has 17 public schools: 13 elementary schools and four secondary schools. With the exception of three elementary schools, every school in ward 8 is considered an inner-city school. As well, I have the most concentrated adult education students in my ward.

The 1995 and 1991 data have shown the following regarding the south end of the ward: 25% in social assistance; 25% low-income families; almost 40% lowincome single households; almost 40% of the residents speak neither English nor French; almost 44% of the population are immigrants; almost 22% of youth are unemployed; and lastly, over 13% of the residents are

unemployed.

I am here to speak to you about the concerns and issues identified by my constituents regarding education, not Bill 104.

As a young child who was born in Hong Kong and raised in ward 8, I know first hand about education in Toronto. My parents came to Canada because they wanted to give their three young children the best education and health care available in the world. Growing up in Toronto also meant experiencing a lot of pain, anger and frustration, as I was thrown into a learning environment that focused on group learning and play that I had never experienced in Hong Kong.

What was most painful throughout my years in the Toronto Board of Education was the way the system treated non-English-speaking parents. Both my sister and I were asked to translate for our parents, everything from report cards to principals' letters and even parent-teacher interviews. Thankfully, the Toronto Board of Education has changed its policy, so that every parent, regardless of culture, race and religion can participate in his or her child's education.

Education plays a central role in my family. Through education my sister, brother and I became productive members of this community. We were also able to pursue careers that many doubted we could attain. No one could ever guess that three poor children with parents who could neither speak nor write English could be successful. My parents believed that education was the only means for us to go beyond a life of poverty.

For many of my constituents, education is regarded as the only safe way to get ahead. The opportunity of receiving an education inspires hopes and dreams for many new Canadians. Education is also used as an indicator of the health of this community. Research has shown a strong relationship between education and health care of an individual. Hence, education should be a right for every person in our community, so that he or she can better himself or herself.

At this time, we should be talking and working on matters that affect the classroom, not Bill 104. Every Ontario student is being affected by secondary school reform. This reform will have an impact on not only Ontario students but also the thousands of international students studying in Ontario. In 1995 there were over 900 students in Ontario educated in the public school system who are visa students.

In the announcements of last fall, the Minister of Education announced a major overhaul of secondary schools in Ontario. The announcements included: the elimination of the fifth year of high school, a change in course options and credit requirements, revised modes of program delivery, changed roles and responsibilities of teaching staff and improved planning and accountability. 1820

I believe that education reform is long overdue. However, since that announcement we have not heard anything from the ministry on when the secondary school reform will be fully implemented, what the revised curriculum will be and how the ministry will communicate these changes to the community. The delay in the implementation of secondary education reform is putting our students at risk.

Other classroom issues the minister has made announcements about but failed to discuss further include: the future of adult education, the new curriculum for students in junior kindergarten to grade 8 and province-wide testing. Every parent and taxpayer deeply cares about how and what we teach our young children. Reports and royal commissions mean nothing to a young child, but implementing their recommendations does. Hence, one needs to critically ask, what does Bill 104 mean to a young child in Ontario?

I can tell you that in my culturally diverse ward Bill 104 means limited access and limited accountability to the students. How does a young child whose first language is neither English nor French get access to the Education Improvement Commission or the local committee? Who does the young child call when he or she has a problem in his or her special education class?

Accountability is a concept frequently used but rarely realized. Again, what does Bill 104 mean to a young child? How will an appointed commission and its local committee be accountable to a child when the commission reports only to the Minister of Education? What mechanisms are in place to ensure that the role and function of the commission will benefit all Ontario students? While the new commission prepares for its new role, what will happen to Ontario students who are caught in the interim? Do our students wait in limbo? How does a young child measure the effectiveness of the commission? What yearly forensic auditing will be done to ensure the commission's educational outcomes will improve the education of all Ontario students?

As you can see, I have a lot of questions for today's hearing. But there is one critical question I have not asked, and I challenge each one of you to answer it. What is the future of school trustees in Ontario? Bill 104 should be called the No School Trustees Act, not the Fewer School Boards Act. There are no functions for school trustees, so why doesn't the government have the courage to abolish them? It is quite clear that this government is looking to reduce expenditures wherever possible, so why is this government prepared to remunerate school

trustees for doing nothing?

Education is the strongest bridge that links our communities together. Whatever Queen's Park plans to do, it has to ensure improvements to all current and future Ontario students. This is an opportune time for this government to implement all its initiatives, not leaving any segments on hold. All the education reforms announced to date have an impact on the classroom. Therefore, the Minister of Education should be putting all his energy and efforts into this area rather than on governance issues which only serve to compromise the integrity of the Ontario education system.

Mr Bartolucci: Thank you very much, Ms Wong, for your excellent presentation. Certainly you've outlined the fears your constituents have and you've outlined your own fears about doing away with trustees. Does this not do what Bill 104 wants it to do: eliminate trustees, eliminate local input into education? In your community — but there are communities all over Ontario — the impact will be enormous. What would happen to the average child in your community if Bill 104 were to be put into practice as it is now? Would it destroy your ability to offer the types of programs that are necessary for your constituents?

Ms Wong: I'm going to answer the question with a scenario that happened last week. Last Tuesday at Danforth and Broadview there was an explosion in my ward. Six schools in total were affected. Four schools were completely closed down. I want to know, from Bill 104, who is the child going to call, who are the parents going to call beside the trustees? None of us can plan for these kinds of local emergencies. The critical question right now is, who are they going to call? When four schools are completely closed down, are they going to call the commission? Are they going to call the local school's education improvement committee to get results?

Right now it is my responsibility, as a trustee, to represent those interests. As I said in my data report to you, over 40% of my constituents in the south end of the ward do not speak English. I do my very best with them. But having said that, I also provide additional translation. Bill 104 was not translated into different languages. I had Bill 104 translated into both Chinese and Vietnamese so that my constituents can understand this bill, because it doesn't matter if the two official languages are English and French. If they cannot understand what the bill means to them, it means nothing to them.

Mr Martin: I'm assuming that when you say they should just get on with it and get rid of trustees alto-

gether you're being facetious?

Ms Wong: It's not being facetious. There is no role for the trustees under Bill 104. I am asking as a constituent and as a local taxpayer, and I speak on behalf of my constituents. I can you tell you right now there is not one single complaint about what we have done in the past two and a half years as trustees. If this act essentially is removing trustees, the role and the function, then the question we have to ask Queen's Park is, why don't they just get rid of them? If there's no role for them, why are you remunerating them \$5,000 for doing nothing?

The reality right now is that we do need trustees, not less of them. I said earlier there are 17 schools in my ward. Eventually, by the time of this amalgamation and reconfiguration of the city of Toronto and Metro Toronto, I will probably have 25 school under the belt I'll call city of Toronto schools, which means you will need more trustees, not less trustees. The reality again, as I said earlier, is that Bill 104 is called the Fewer School Boards

Act. It also means fewer trustees.

Mr Skarica: I have one answer for you. You asked about the secondary school reform. What happened was that we had an initial cutoff date for submissions on December 1, and we extended that into January. We originally anticipated 6,000 or 7,000 submissions, and we got 23,000. That's going to take to the end of February to analyse, so the report will come out some time in March. That's what's happened to it.

Ms Wong: But sir, we just want to make sure that when we inform our community — because right now your government is telling us it will be implemented by the fall of 1998 — if we're going to be implementing in the fall of 1998 — we are already doing the 1997-98 school year, as well as the staffing model — how can we implement the secondary school reform without talking about the curriculum from grade 6 to 8? That is the most critical piece for us.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Wong. I for one can attest as to just how active you are in your community. Thank you for coming here this evening.

#### FRANK GARDINER

The Chair: Our next presenter is Frank Gardiner. Welcome, Mr Gardiner. Thank you for your patience throughout this long afternoon. We look forward to your addressing the committee.

Mr Frank Gardiner: I'm last but not least.

The Chair: Never least.

**Mr Gardiner:** If you want to stand and have a seventh-inning stretch or something, be my guest. Okay? I'll join you.

The Chair: Mr Gardiner, you have a full 10 minutes

just like everyone else.

Mr Gardiner: A procedural question here, Madam Chair: I'd like to make sure as a disgruntled taxpayer that the elected politicians who haven't stayed here till the final bell don't get paid a full day's pay. I think that's pretty important and I'd like it in the record.

The Chair: I think those of us who are here are

relieved to hear that.

Mr Gardiner: I'll try and make this fun. It's been a long day. I'll give you a very fast little bit of my background. It's tough to be a 53-year-old rebel. My father was a Huron county school inspector. My mother was a teacher. My brother was a teacher. My wife is a teacher.

I'm a private business person.

I've been very fortunate, married to the same lady for 30 years and three kids through the Toronto school system. You might take a lesson from this. They got through it in spite of this system, from our point of view, and I'm not being anti-education. I just think there's tremendous room for improvement. In all the years in north Toronto, I've never met a trustee, let alone found out what they really do, and particularly in the last election, which is why I ran. I was absolutely fed up with the wastage and the posh offices down on College Street and the lack of information that was coming through in this day and age of e-mail, fax and phone. I think it's a travesty, and I think this is changing.

Anyway, in Peter C. Newman's 1995 book, The Canadian Revolution, I finally found a Canadian writer who in a sense spoke for me and my frustrations, and I suspect for a lot of other ordinary people like me and my

family.

My eldest child, Jane, is at McGill, in her last year. My middle son is at Wilfrid Laurier, in business. My youngest boy got a hockey scholarship to RPI in Troy, New York. When are Canadians going to find out that maybe this is the route we should be going? Talk about brain drain and athletic drain.

I believe the continuing Canadian revolution described by Mr Newman has forced "the burghers of a once smug country to stage a revolt against the notion of having their personal decisions made for them by self-elected hierarchies dedicated to their own perpetuation. This was true not only of governments but of every aspect of life and work, including businesses, unions, schools, universities" — I added "churches" — "and the family."

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The Canadians in this new revolution described by Peter Newman — I agree totally with him — have a great determination, and I share this determination, to pursue two bedrock objectives: First, that politicians at all levels, of all stripes, of all parties "stop treating them as commodities to be bought with their own money at quadrennial auctions called election campaigns." That's Peter Newman. The second quote is "that some way be found to alleviate the despair of the young, burdened by a shallow, antiquated education system and diminished by a harshly narrowing job market."

In November 1994, a year before Mr Newman's book came out and six months before what I call our Ontario tax revolt — landslide victory by Mr Harris's Common Sense Revolution — I ran my own small grass-roots, eight-week campaign in protest at our current education structure, and you have the information there. It's a historical document now, if not hysterical. You know, you just get fed up. It's like the movie. I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it any more. Believe me, it's there

As a parent of three young Canadians who luckily made it through our current Ontario educational system, I had then, and have now, many concerns as to the enormous wastage and politics within our current educational system, and we're talking rampant Nazi feminism to gay rights to you name it. It's all out there, and I've monitored it, and as a family person I'm very concerned. I'd like to have a bigger choice in this.

My individual campaign then as well as now is simply, "Together let's reduce trustee salaries" — you're doing that — "reform tax spending and re-create a stronger, audited and therefore more accountable public educational system." If you care to read my literature, you'll find I believe many concerns that tend to support our current government in the difficult leadership role of fixing our current Ontario educational system.

I want to thank Mr Snobelen. I'm here because last week I saw CTV, and it made me want to puke, because the press is doing a bad hatchet job, and I resent it, because this is my elected government. I'm not rabid Conservative, Liberal or NDP. I'm just damned tired of the media trying to foster this public — I'm from the media. I was originally in broadcasting.

Thank you, Mr Snobelen, man to man, woman to woman, for moving in the right direction, at last, for the many parents and taxpayers who have children in the public school system and are quite frankly afraid to speak out because of the very powerful teachers' union and the real possibility of reprisals directed towards these children, and I'm not joking about that. My kids, thank God, are out of the system.

Thank you. Most of the media have sadly missed the truth and facts of this extremely important job you and our elected government are now doing. I hope you're doing something more than just reading the menus at the Albany Club, and I thank you for that. Hang in there, and once again, thank you for daring to lead to get things done.

The Chair: We have five minutes for questioning. Mr Froese: I would like to move that we give him another 10 minutes.

Mr Gardiner: I think at 53 years of age I concur in that.

By the way, Madam Chair, I have never taken one cent of unemployment insurance — I'm not gloating; I'm just telling you. Thank God that other people have had to do it, but I'm just saying, and I've never been a member of a union. I am just your average Canadian guy who is really, really starting to get fed up. I think you saw it in 1994. On the back of this, you'll see it on Huron County Cottage Associations and what we're trying to do with email. I'd ask you to use e-mail, because it's going to eliminate the hierarchy. It's going to flatten everything.

You're going to be accountable directly to me, the taxpayer. E-mail is going to contribute to that.

The Chair: Thank you. We have about two minutes per caucus. In the absence of the NDP, who should be first, I will move to the government caucus. Who wants to go?

Mr Froese: Thank you very much for coming, and I certainly believe that you believe that parents should be more involved in the education of their kids.

Mr Gardiner: Providing their spouse is not on the

Mr Froese: It's great to hear, but it's hard to believe. You're a trustee and you believe that —

Mr Gardiner: I'm not a trustee. I ran for office.

**Mr Froese:** You ran for trustee. You should be a trustee, I should say.

If we're trying to strengthen the role of the parents through the school councils, what advice could you give us on that?

Mr Gardiner: First of all, I think it's very important to understand. I ran an eight-week campaign, and I can't believe how the unions and the vested interests will send out documentation immediately. It is scary, and I shared it with the board of trade and the head of the Catholic church. That's how scary it is. You know, I'm profamily. What's wrong with that? I'm also from Huron county. I'm not a redneck. I care about this province. What's wrong with being a passionate Canadian?

To answer your question, the first thing is, let's work together with the NDP, the Liberals and the Conservatives. Let's stop the bickering and let's really get parents on side and make sure they're not on the payroll, that they're not snorting at the trough. Get these Bill Gates types of people. I see this in an American university, RPI. This entrepreneurship is a alive and well and it's really doing things. I'd like to see it develop here in Canada, and we can do it. It doesn't matter what party you're from. Get them on the committee. It doesn't have to be \$5.000

Let me tell you something. I wish the media would do an audit of the trustees, because quite frankly, I think it's closer to \$95,000 with all perks, fringe benefits and those tremendous golden parachutes they vote themselves. What a travesty.

But anyway, to answer your question, get parents, get the ordinary parents who care, who aren't on the payroll, who are really worried about where their children are going in the education system. Ask me about total immersion French in Ontario. Three of our children have gone through total immersion French. It's not working.

**Mr Duncan:** Your daughter is at McGill University, in her last year?

Mr Gardiner: Yes, sir.

Mr Duncan: What is she studying?

Mr Gardiner: Well, she took business and she went into psychology. I don't know what that means.

Mr Duncan: Your son is at Wilfrid Laurier?

Mr Gardiner: Business.

**Mr Duncan:** Your second son is on a hockey scholarship?

Mr Gardiner: That's correct, US\$26,000 per year, RPI.

Mr Duncan: What is RPI?

Mr Gardiner: Rensselaer, Troy, just north of Albany. They play Harvard and Yale.

Mr Duncan: So they're all fine post-secondary education institutions?

Mr Gardiner: In spite of the education system, yes.

Mr Duncan: Good-quality education?

Mr Gardiner: Yes, sir.

Mr Duncan: Your children got into them despite the fact that our system is so bad?

Mr Gardiner: I'm not saying it's so bad. I'm saying there's tremendous room for improvement and there's

awful wastage.

Mr Duncan: I don't think anybody would disagree that there's room for improvement, but I think that we should bear in mind when we're changing things, maybe we might not want to throw the baby out with the

Mr Gardiner: I knew you were going to say that.

Mr Duncan: Your children are an excellent example. My son is in French immersion right now as well and I think the programs work quite well.

Mr Gardiner: Do you speak French?

Mr Duncan: Oui.

Mr Gardiner: That's why it's working.

Mr Duncan: McGill is my alma mater. No, it's working because — yes, absolutely, parent involvement is key to a child's success, there's no doubt about it. But when you look at the results, and yes, there are some that we can improve on, many of our students do very well internationally, domestically. I think we should, as we're reforming education, as I think most people are advocating, move cautiously and with prudence and be careful, because if we make mistakes with these things, we can't go back and fix them for the kids who are going through the system.

Mr Gardiner: With all due respect, I don't believe that most people are advocating that. We want responsible change, yes, but you can't penetrate the educational system. They're so caught up in their own doctrine and they're controlling the levers of the decision-making process, which I think is undemocratic, and I think there's big bucks from the unions and federations.

Mr Duncan: I don't think that's accurate at all, because I think a number of us would consider ourselves to be people who are involved in the process. I'm not

controlled by them, nor do I feel that way. I just feel that if we're going to debate things, we ought to recognize successes like your children, due in part to the school system and due in large part to parental involvement, I agree with you. All the studies say that.

Mr Gardiner: Thank you. As parents, we like to be

recognized in that equation.

Mr Duncan: But I think we should also recognize the contribution of educators as well and not just simply trash them all as bureaucrats and uncaring, because they're not. I know a lot of wonderful administrators in the education system and teachers in the education system, many of whom have not gotten wealthy doing what they're doing, many of whom have no interest in getting wealthy, and I think we should just be careful not to lump everybody into the same category.

Mr Gardiner: I appreciate your comments. I didn't come here to be lectured and I appreciate your —

Mr Duncan: Nor did I.

Mr Gardiner: Strangely enough, we have our roles reversed here. I think you're here to listen to me, and this may be part of the problem, this not listening.

The Chair: Mr Duncan, if you don't mind, let Mr

Gardiner finish.

Mr Gardiner: Understand something when I saw the news release on TV. I can't afford to be here. I had to come down here at 10 to 6 and wait an hour. I'm not being paid anything. I'm here because I care and I have three kids going through the system. I'm not knocking every teacher in the system, but I get tired of that educational arrogance and that NDP philosophy that just boom, like a rhinoceros, stops everything in progress. I'm talking about the trustees and I'm talking about responsible change. It started here and I want—

Mr Duncan: Do you support getting rid of all

trustees?

**Mr Gardiner:** I certainly support reviewing it dramatically, the way the Conservative government has done that, and that's what I elected them for.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Gardiner, for being here and for your patience and for presenting your thoughts in what surely is a dynamic manner.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would remind you that we

meet tomorrow at 3:30 in room 151.

The committee adjourned at 1841.



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# Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie ND)

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North / -Nord PC)

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Première session, 36e législature

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Tuesday 25 February 1997

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 25 février 1997

Standing committee on

social development

Comité permanent des affaires sociales

Fewer School Boards Act, 1997

Loi de 1997 réduisant le nombre de conseils scolaires



Chair: Annamarie Castrilli Clerk: Tonia Grannum

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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

# STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Tuesday 25 February 1997

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

# COMITÉ PERMANENT DES AFFAIRES SOCIALES

Mardi 25 février 1997

The committee met at 1533 in room 151.

# FEWER SCHOOL BOARDS ACT, 1997 LOI DE 1997 RÉDUISANT LE NOMBRE DE CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Consideration of Bill 104, An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system. providing for certain matters related to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 104, Loi visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte, l'efficacité et la qualité du système scolaire ontarien en permettant la réduction du nombre des conseils scolaires, en créant la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation, chargée d'encadrer la transition vers le nouveau système. en prévoyant certaines questions liées aux élections de 1997 et en apportant d'autres améliorations à la Loi sur l'éducation et à la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.

# HELENA WEHRSTEIN

The Chair (Ms Annamarie Castrilli): Welcome to our hearings this afternoon. Could I ask Helena Wehrstein to come forward. Thank you very much for being here this afternoon. I welcome you to the committee. We have 10 minutes per individual. You can use that time in any way that you wish, and if there is any time left over, the committee will ask you some questions.

Ms Helena Wehrstein: Thank you for the opportunity to address your committee. I am a parent of a five-year-old who attends senior kindergarten at Ossington-Old Orchard Public School in the Toronto Board of Education. I am also a teacher at Rosedale Public School in Toronto, which gives me a vested interest in this matter. However, it is having a child who has just entered the school system and has many years ahead of her that really drives me to oppose this bill. Being a teacher makes me more aware of what could be in store for my daughter's future.

Despite my dislike of public speaking, and the fact that I have never done anything like this before, I decided I had to ask to speak to these hearings. I am hoping not everyone on the government side of the House and in this committee has finalized their decision to support Bill 104. The best arguments you are hearing from the bill's many critics ought to be given careful consideration and not simply dismissed as the voices of special interests. I make no apologies for taking a special interest in my child's

education and in the future of her entire generation of Ontario youth.

My first concern with Bill 104 is the process. The legislation has not yet been passed, but the structures for implementing it are already being put in place and school trustees will soon lose the legal powers they were elected by the people to exercise. Their authority is overridden by the Education Improvement Commission, an unelected body appointed by the government, whose rulings are not subject to court challenge.

Reflecting the government's unseemly haste, very few hours are allotted to these hearings. In Toronto, for example, you will hear from only about 10% of those who have applied to speak unless you choose to extend the process. No firm dollar figures have been attached to the provincial grant that is supposed to make up for the removal of education funding from property taxes, so we are left in the dark as to what the funding formula will be. But if the bill's critics proceed, on the basis of the minister's pronouncements, to estimate per student funding in future years, we are accused of fearmongering.

The real costs of board amalgamations have not been soberly assessed. There has been no feasibility or impact study done. The Ministry of Education shuns public exposure. The Parent-Teacher Association of Rosedale Public School invited the minister to send a representative to a meeting concerning Bill 104; no one showed up. This process is not well designed to inform the public and help us to participate meaningfully in a debate over the future of the school system in Ontario.

As for the bill itself, it removes the power of municipalities to raise any taxes for education. This has been done in the name of equality. Supposedly children outside Metro are being shortchanged because citizens and businesses in the Metro area have chosen, through our elected representatives, to fund our schools at a higher per student level. There may indeed by a case for replacing the contribution from local business and industry taxes with a province-wide per student grant, but to remove at the same time the power to supplement this grant with funds from residential taxes is really to cut local boards and their trustees out of a meaningful role in educational decision-making.

Elected school boards provide a special form of politics dedicated to informed public discussion and choice about the nature of the education we provide for our children. Local citizens are able to have a meaningful debate about educational priorities, and they have an incentive to do so in so far as their municipal taxes pay for schooling directly. Provincial elections do not permit the same type of focus because education policy is just one of a wide range of issues upon which citizens decide

to support one party or another. Bill 104 will effectively jettison this local form of public debate and choice.

To judge by his public musings, Minister Snobelen would really have preferred to scrap school boards altogether. But since there are constitutional barriers to doing so, he has truncated their function, while creating in the process huge bureaucracies, stripped of serious trustee scrutiny and located at a much greater distance from local schools.

The proposed Toronto mega-board with 550 schools, 19,000 teachers, 300,000 students — this is more students than in six of Canada's provinces — will have a huge administration. How will a board with 550 schools in its jurisdiction be able to canvass local schools, solicit their input in designing policy, or take account of the specific character and special needs of schools in different areas? Far from helping to solve the very real problem of impersonal and remote bureaucracies, Bill 104 will inadvertently compound it.

In effect, the authors of Bill 104 are arguing that the Ontario school system is far too decentralized as it stands, that it has too much local input, with full-time trustees democratically chosen by the local electorate running around visiting schools, attending parents' nights, listening to the concerns of staff, students and parents, explaining the board's policies, hearing about specific needs and problems that need to be addressed.

That's wasteful, apparently. The parents I have talked to in my daughter's school do not consider it wasteful. The salaries plus the office-related expenses of Toronto trustees, the highest paid in the province, comprise just 0.2% of the board's budget. For this we get trustees who are a critical component of the system's accountability to the public. If they are duds, collecting a full-time paycheque and doing a part-time job, we can, and should, replace them. Should they set their own salaries and benefits? No. But neither should you. No politicians should be in a position to vote themselves a raise. The entire process should go to an independent review.

What I would defend, however, is the notion of fulltime trustees. If they are paid a maximum of \$5,000, as is presently envisaged, most will be able to do no more than attend board meetings. Proper attention to present responsibilities, local involvement and close oversight of the board's administration and policies will be effectively precluded.

#### 1540

The Toronto Board of Education could be looking at cuts of up to 25%. It has already had its budget cut from \$643 million in 1993 to \$608 million in 1996, while serving 6,000 more children and adding three new developmentally handicapped schools at a cost of \$8 million. Less than 5% is now spent on general administration. So if the entire administration were cut, 20% would still need to be cut from each school and its direct support services.

What would this mean for my daughter's school? The 1995-96 budget for her school was \$1,656,011. A 20% cut would be \$331,202. If you cut 25% of building maintenance, supplies and photocopying, and library supplies, 50% of the furniture and equipment, international languages, and field trips, one education assistant,

one office staff, one caretaker and two teachers, you would still need to cut a further \$51,396. This would mean higher class sizes, fewer programs and less support for the remaining teachers.

The Toronto board has worked hard to protect out-ofclassroom services as well; they are not frills. Let me give you one example: translation services. Perhaps a quarter of the parents at Ossington-Old Orchard Public School do not understand or speak English well enough to participate in our parent meetings or to read the school newsletter without the benefit of translation. The Toronto board understands what it takes to assure meaningful parent participation in multi-ethnic schools, so it provides this service. That makes our school community more inclusive.

To conclude, we all have an enormous stake in the House's decision on Bill 104, not simply in terms of the bill itself, but because its passage will provide a launching pad for a series of far-reaching, and quite possibly irreversible changes in our public school system that Minister Snobelen has indicated he will introduce in the near future. These subsequent steps are not at all clear to the rest of us, but we can be sure they will be driven, above all, by the government's need to make even deeper cuts in spending in order to pay for its tax cuts, while moving swiftly towards a balanced budget at the same time.

The government needs to face the fact that it cannot realistically keep all the big-ticket promises it made in the Common Sense Revolution. Which ones will you abandon? If you proceed with your tax cut promise on schedule, then it seems inevitable that we shall see the promise to preserve classroom funding betrayed, especially in Metro-area schools that will lose, if this bill passes third reading, the finding sources that have until now paid for the whole of our school systems. I would ask you, respectfully, to reconsider the course of action that you are about to embark upon.

On the back of the handout is the budget for my daughter's school, which the trustee prepared, with, as we can best figure, the worst from the rumours that have come. Unfortunately, we don't have any firm figures, but on the back there is a possible scenario of what her school could look like with these cuts. I just put that there.

The Chair: Thank you very much for taking the time to be with us here today. You have used up your entire 10 minutes. We really appreciate your being here.

#### **EVA NICHOLS**

The Chair: May I ask Eva Nichols to come forward. Welcome to our committee. We look forward to hearing your views.

Ms Eva Nichols: Today I'm appearing in front of you as an education and legislation consultant who works with a number of organizations supporting students with special needs, such as the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario and Voice for Hearing Impaired Children

You may be surprised to hear that I shall start out by telling you I support the thrust of Bill 104 when it talks about the desire to improve the accountability, effective-

ness and quality of Ontario's school system. However, I don't think that what is in Bill 104 will actually achieve those outcomes, so perhaps we need to go back to the drawing board on some of the fronts of what this bill is about.

I have no particular concern about the decision to reduce the number of school boards. I am not wedded to the status quo and in fact supported the recommendations contained in the Sweeney report for reducing the number of school boards in Ontario. Perhaps the time has come for us to make those kinds of changes.

But I certainly see a problem with the recommendation that the new district school board boundaries be established through regulation rather than by statute because this does not allow for any public dialogue or input into the decisions to be made. For example, I have great concerns about the size of some of the proposed school boards, in particular the Metro school board, and the kind of mix we shall see with the amalgamation of urban and rural school boards without any real consideration of the impact on students; for example, London, Elgin, Middlesex and Oxford, which have very different service deliveries.

If such amalgamations go ahead, there needs to be a clear-cut direction to all school boards that they will not deal with this process by eliminating any special services or moving to the lowest common denominator in terms of service delivery. Further, school boards must be made to understand in this and in all subsequent legislation that they must not and will not be allowed to continue to contravene the Education Act, as so many boards do right now.

The size of school boards is not the key factor in the effectiveness of service delivery to students. The most important factors are funding, the level of compliance with current legislation and the attitudes towards meeting the identified needs of learners, rather than focusing on school board philosophy or the desire of trustees to be reelected. As an ex-school trustee, I am not particularly concerned about the suggested changes to the numbers and remuneration for school trustees. Five thousand dollars is a lot more money than I earned as a newly elected school trustee not that many years ago. However, I do feel that some of the comments on how school trustees are going to function give many people in the community a cause for concern.

In terms of the revised eligibility criteria, this will of course also have an impact on the eligibility of certain people to sit on committees, such as the special education advisory committees. That should be mentioned in this bill

I understand the decision of the government to establish a process for handing over the reins from the current school boards to the future district school boards.

In principle, I am not opposed to the establishment of the Education Improvement Commission, but I do have some significant concerns about certain aspects of the mandate and function of the commission, as described in part XIV of the act. I urge this committee to make significant changes to this section to ensure that the fundamental principles of fairness, democracy, rights to due process and focus on meeting the needs of all students are part of the mandate of such a commission.

For example, I am very concerned that the commission is not bound by most Ontario legislation, and in particular doesn't appear to have to comply with any part of the current Education Act. The mandate of the commission as described in clauses 335 to 343 of the act should clearly state that the commission must ensure school boards do not contravene any of their legislated duties, either under the Education Act or the Human Rights Code; further, that the commission itself must ensure that it functions within the Education Act; and further, that in managing their budgets and other fiscal commitments, school boards must abide by the current regulation governing the general legislative grants.

As mentioned, I am concerned that the commission is totally immune from the traditional democratic and legal processes contained in legislation such as the Regulations Act, the Statutory Powers Procedure Act, the freedom of information legislation and any challenge in court. This can create significant hardship for students and families within those school boards that are already contravening current legislation and may choose to use the directives of the commission as an excuse for not serving certain students according to their mandate as set out in the Education Act.

Regarding special education advisory committees, with fewer school boards naturally there will be fewer special education advisory committees in place. However, their role will be even more important in advising school boards on all aspects of special education programming and service delivery.

Therefore, I believe Bill 104 should include a clear-cut statement about the continuation of SEACs and cross-reference this to section 206 of the Education Act. If anything, SEACs need to be strengthened and there needs to be a process for a formal link between SEACs and local parent councils.

A key point to achieving accountability, effectiveness and quality, which is after all what Bill 104 is about, is the funding of education and, from my point of view, the funding of special education. Frankly, we simply do not know what the government's intent is in this regard.

The recently released Ernst and Young report on educational expenditures, and in particular what the government and/or Ernst and Young — it's not entirely clear to me — consider in-class spending gives significant concern to those of us who actually do understand the funding of education and who deal with meeting the needs of exceptional learners.

For example, given that the diagnosis of learning disabilities can only be made by registered psychologists or medical practitioners by Ontario law, the exclusion of psychological services from classroom-related funding will significantly disfranchise these students. Without an appropriate diagnosis and intervention recommendations from a knowledgable psychologist, students with learning disabilities are unlikely to have their needs met, nor are they likely to achieve their potential. This will not lead us to improved quality of education.

The act makes no specific reference to funding, so we don't actually know, for example, whether there will be the same amount of funding for administrative or support

purposes for each school board regardless of its size or the number of its students. We do not know whether the per pupil costs will be the same regardless of the location and actual needs of a student. On January 13, the minister stated that the new funding model will "fund all students according to their needs" and that the model will recognize "students with special needs." But what this will actually look like and who will make the final decisions we simply don't know.

In conclusion, I strongly urge you, the committee that has been entrusted with Bill 104, to ensure that in section 327 of this act there be very specific recommendations

relating to the following points:

That the new district school boards must meet their legislated obligations relating to educating all students, including exceptional students, as these are set out in the Human Rights Code, the Education Act and the relevant regulations under the Education Act.

That the Ministry of Education and Training must maintain its accountability responsibilities as set out in the Education Act and the relevant regulations, such as

regulation 306.

That the funding of education in Ontario, as determined by the new funding formula, focuses on the same stated purposes and outcomes as Bill 104, ie, enhancing the effectiveness, accountability and quality of Ontario's educational system.

Without such amendments, this act simply will not

achieve its stated outcome.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Nichols, for bringing your perspective and your recommendations to us. You've used up all of your time.

#### CLAUDIA SOMMERS BROWN

The Chair: May I call upon Claudia Brown, please. Welcome. Thank you for being here.

Mrs Claudia Sommers Brown: I was invited to address the committee today as a result, I presume, of my having submitted a brief to the secondary school consultation office. This brief was submitted on my own behalf as a teacher, but more importantly as a parent of three children who have among them logged 28 child-years in a publicly funded Ontario school system.

The substance of my original brief was devoted to what most concerns any parent of school-age children: What is going to be taught in the classroom? Every aspect of education must be weighed and measured against this ultimate standard: Does it contribute to

excellence in education?

The particulars of Bill 104 might seem remote from the concerns of the classroom, focusing as they do on the structure and jurisdiction of the educational bureaucracy, present and future. I will let you in on a little secret here. This is just my view, but I'd be willing to bet it represents the views of many parents. I confess that it matters very little how the administrative layer governing children's education is structured or even, within reason, how much it costs, as long as it does three things: (1) delivers educational excellence; (2) recognizes the primacy of the parent in the hierarchy of responsibility for the welfare of the child; and (3) is accessible and responsive to parental concerns about the conduct of education.

In my experience and that of many others of my acquaintance, Ontario's education system has fallen down on all three of these points. In Bill 104 I do not detect anything designed specifically to remedy this situation and in fact I see some provisions which promise only to aggravate it.

Many parents are very disturbed by the proposed reduction in the number of school trustees. They consider trustees to be the only players in the education enterprise who hold their positions by the will of the people and who are directly answerable to them. Over the years, I have taken only a few opportunities to contact my trustees, usually about matters in the classroom and usually to little effect. The outcome has always been determined by the response of the school principal, whether he or she was sympathetic to my point of view, whether he or she was prepared to exercise authority over the teaching staff. These are the deciding factors in such instances.

While I did spend some years active in the local parent association, including two as its president, I would not call myself an activist, never having taken a role in trustee elections or made presentations to the school board. But I am acquainted with parents who have taken the activist route, and I must conclude that for every parent who is publicly bemoaning the dramatic restructuring proposed in Bill 104, there is probably another one quite ready to say that it can't make things any worse, because we already have an unresponsive bureaucratic monolith as it is, that the accessibility of the system depends very much upon your politics and some parents are consistently shut out.

Just try, as one group of parents did, to prevent a new principal from unilaterally eliminating a phonics-based reading program which had caused a demonstrable improvement in every aspect of that school's performance over several years, and you will see how selectively the current governing structure responds to its constituents.

However, if this government expects to live up to its claims of revolution, its role is certainly a good deal more than just not making things worse. The voter and taxpayer have a right to expect that changes, especially radical ones, will be for the better. The individual parent often feels like he is beating his head against the wall, faced down by an educational establishment of self-styled experts secure in their authority, with the backing of powerful unions. That parent is looking to the proposed radical changes to give him some foothold in the process. I don't think he will find it in Bill 104.

This bill establishes the Education Improvement Commission, whose function, according to section 335, is to "oversee the transition to the new system of education governance in Ontario." I submit that it should more properly be named the Commission for Improvement of the Educational Economy, because there is nothing whatever in its mandate which guarantees that at the end of the day education in the Ontario classroom will improve. Pass Bill 104 and we are really no closer to graduating students who can read and understand the Globe and Mail editorial page, which all too few of them can do right now.

I would also submit that the bill leaves hanging in limbo those structures of governance which have the only

real chance of effecting genuine educational improvement in Ontario. I refer to section 335, subsections (g) and (h), under which the commission is mandated to advise the minister "on the feasibility of strengthening the role of school councils over time" and of "increasing parental involvement in education governance." This is not a mandate to recommend a plan of action; it is a directive to contemplate whether the establishment of localized responsibility is even feasible.

This government has been accused of viewing education far too much as a business. There is some validity to that criticism, but I think there is also validity to the criticism that the existing system is at the opposite extreme, having treated its shareholders so shabbily that they are increasingly taking their business elsewhere, and wishing they could take their tax dollars with them. However, I think we must ask this government, what kind of business announces publicly to its shareholders that it plans to reconfigure its whole governing structure by a certain date while it is still in the feasibility study phase of devising some of the new structures which may replace the old ones? The answer to this question is, it's the kind of business which isn't going to stay in business very long.

If this government thinks that its education shareholders are going to be content with waiting to see what place and powers the Education Improvement Commission decides to dole out to them at its pleasure, with, as section 344 stipulates, no avenue of appeal on any such decisions no matter how unsatisfactory, then this government may be surprised to find itself mortally downsized at the next election.

I have a great deal of respect for business. My father devoted his working life to manufacturing. He got his education at one of the world's finest business schools, at the University of Chicago, something he has in common, by the way, with the current president of the University of Toronto. Obviously education and business don't have to be enemies. But my father's teacher, conservative economist Milton Friedman, would be the first to tell you that bigger is not better, that small enterprises and local control provide the highest-quality service, the greatest efficiency and, in the larger realm, the most freedom for the citizen-consumer.

#### 1600

Bill 104 as it now stands is premature. The role and constitution of school councils is the most important component of the educational governance package, yet it has been left at little more than a footnote in the legislation. The stakeholders in Ontario education include not just parents and educators but all of our society. There is no one living in this province whose future welfare is not affected by whether or not the average graduate of our public school systems can sort out fact from fantasy. There is too much moral, philosophical and political snake oil on the market today for us to allow the perpeturation of an education system whose graduates can barely read the label.

I had the impression when the Harris government took office that real revolution in education was possible. There was a lot of sabre-rattling about standards, for both teachers and students. But based on the shift in focus

towards governance and the handing over of curriculum matters to people who are, for the most part, long-time players in the ancien régime, I think the ministry has bought into some pretty serious snake oil itself. Somewhere in this increasingly tight circle of operatives there has to be a role for the parents on the front lines of the local school.

The stakeholders in Ontario education deserve to know precisely how the conduct of education will be governed in this province. If the ministry intends to proceed with restructuring the system without having worked out the role of the school councils, then the message is clear that the important decisions are going to be made at some other level of governance. If school councils were actually intended to do any meaningful work, the government would hardly have risked paralysing itself by leaving these bodies in limbo.

As an aside, I hope the ministry will not hesitate to empower school councils just because of a few strident howls about the potential hijacking of the councils by special interest groups. It is disturbing to note that when people who are critical of the system take the trouble to run for office and convince the voters to elect them, it is called hijacking, but when those who embrace the fads and endorse the status quo get elected, it's called democracy in action.

If people want to argue calls with the little league umpire, they ought to volunteer to coach a team. It's certainly the story in my neighbourhood that it's the same faces who turn up to coach all the sports or lead the Scouts or do the hot dogs and field trips at school, that small group of people, many of them employed full-time, willing to give the time and do the work. These same people will probably turn up on the school councils, where, like everything else, volunteers will always be welcome but will be in short supply.

But at least with school councils it will be the people in the neighbourhoods who are monitoring the conduct of education for those most directly affected by it. You in the ministry must decide and be forthcoming about who should constitute these councils and just how much discretionary power over hiring, funding, curriculum, facilities etc these bodies will have. This way the people of Ontario can intelligently decide just how much power they intend to go on giving to you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs Sommers Brown. We appreciate your comments. There will not be any time for questions, I'm afraid.

## MICHAEL FLANAGAN

The Chair: Michael Flanagan. Thank you very much for being here. Welcome to the committee.

Mr Michael Flanagan: My name is Michael Flanagan. I live in the city of Toronto, as I have for virtually all of my life. As a child in the early 1950s, I attended Holy Rosary school when school money was very scarce. Everybody made their own way to school, purchased their own supplies and almost everything else associated with schooling. Classes were large, salaries were small, religious communities were committed to teaching and school boards on the Catholic end were dominated by priests.

Since those years, I attended a Catholic high school, St Michael's, and then graduated from university. I spent a few years supply teaching in both the public and separate systems. I was first elected to the Metropolitan Separate School Board in 1978, when the honorarium was \$6,000, and during those years have chaired many committees and am presently vice-chairman of the board.

More important, I am the father of four children: one in university, two in elementary school, and a two-yearold who is here today. My wife is a teacher with the

Toronto Board of Education.

I point out this because I appear before you as a parent, a citizen, a user of the educational system, and not in my role as vice-chairman of the MSSB. But what is important is that I've been involved in the educational system for many years and I believe I have good insight into the system. I don't contend that the system is perfect, and we all know there is no perfect system of government anywhere, but what I believe is that since the early 1950s, with limited resources, we've always taken steps to bring about improvement.

We now have Bill 104, which if passed will make drastic changes. The sole objective is to save money, with no thought to improving the education of our children. Are these drastic changes taking us back to the educa-

tional system of the 1950s?

First, I will make a comment with respect to these hearings. Fortunately for me, I was granted the opportunity to present my thoughts to this committee, but for many, including the MSSB, they will not have the opportunity to comment on these potentially most dramatic changes in education in the history of this province. The largest board in Canada, the MSSB, will not even be heard by this committee.

I believe the bill is being rushed through in order to impose changes before the whole picture is known and before the public has proper awareness and input. What is the rush? Is it unreasonable to ask that the next election be deferred for one year so that the funding model, the new method of curriculum changes, the governance responsibilities etc are developed and discussed? Clearly, in my opinion, there will be little debate or discussion because the government does not want people to know what the plans are. Is it possible that they haven't decided what the plans are?

Let's look at the history of the Ministry of Education since June 1995. Within a short period of time, the Minister of Education says to his employees, "We must create a crisis." So last year the ministry took \$400 million out of grants intended for the poor boards in the province. This meant boards either cut programs such as junior kindergarten, or as the MSSB did, cut maintenance, school supplies, repairing school buildings or school yards. Like most boards, the MSSB did it without cutting

programs but had to carry a deficit.

This year the ministry announced further cuts of \$600 million to \$900 million. It probably would have been impossible without property tax increases or major program cuts. Then came Santa Claus, and the announcement came from the minister there would be no cuts, yet in less than three short weeks, the minister introduced Bill 104, the takeover of funding of education, and made

other profound changes to education. The fact of the matter is, the government wants to impose these changes without providing any detail and without a comprehensive

plan — frightening, to say the least.

The Bill is flawed. More important, the changes envisaged by the bill are just the beginning of major and much more consequential changes to come. One does not reduce school boards, trustees and honorariums, and implement an undemocratic commission just to save some money. No, we are going for much bigger reductions than these. Why not tell people what these changes are? Of course, this government has to honour its election commitment of 30% tax reduction. It would be reprehensible to do this at the expense of the education of the children.

Bill 104, except for the Education Improvement Commission, does not make major changes, but what it does do is set up the changes to come. All of the changes lead to the obvious questions of why and what is the

future plan.

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With respect to constitutional rights and privileges. section 1(4), the change is so subtle that one must ask why. The section as written in the Education Act doesn't need a change unless there is a future agenda with respect to Catholic constitutional rights. I believe the government is setting up for the dissolution of all school boards, and this change is to facilitate the dissolution of Catholic school boards. Why else would the change be made?

There is notable change in board reduction and trustee representation. Board reduction in areas where the boards feel there are advantages are worthwhile, but forcing boards to amalgamate, thus creating huge geographical areas, makes proper representation much more difficult

and is unacceptable.

Similarly with trustee representation, reducing trustees reduces representation. Representation is the essence of democracy. It is worth paying the price for democracy. No one disputes the need to bring about some reduction in the number of boards and the number of trustees, but does this government expect to bring about massive savings by this reduction, or is it, I ask, by privatization, outsourcing, province-wide collective bargaining and voluntary parent participation in school councils? This is unacceptable.

There is the eligibility of spouses of employees. First, preventing employees' spouses from running for another board is outright discrimination. I have never had a conflict of interest with respect to my wife. She never gained anything from an MSSB decision. How many members of Parliament, members of the Legislature, members of municipal councils are in similar situations where their wives or husbands are working in various government positions but apparently do not have a

conflict?

The Education Improvement Commission is an autocratic body, and in transition it appears to be a watchdog over elected trustees. Not only are they a watchdog, they have power to overturn any financial decision dealing in paltry amounts of \$50,000. Also, and more important, they have powers to override trustees and school boards in both monetary and non-monetary decisions.

The decisions of the commission are final and shall not be reviewed or questioned by a court. Is this transitional because we will be going to a new system of governance,

that being no school boards at all?

Finally, the role of the school advisory councils. In 1979, I moved a motion at the MSSB which meant that every school in the board would have a parent association, so I very much support parental involvement in the system. It seems clear that the government intends that these councils be empowered to deal with such matters as program, student discipline and assessment. This direction would probably culminate in school-site management. This direction will always fail. The direction will fail because parents will always fail. The direction will fail because parents will always look subjectively at the system and not objectively as to what is best for the whole system. Also, controversial issues inevitably divide the community, with bitter feelings on one side or the other.

In conclusion, I submit again that this bill is flawed. This bill does not bring about true educational reform in as much as it does not contribute to the improvement of the quality of education, nor does it bring about meaningful changes to education governance. I urge you therefore not to recommend the enactment of this legislation.

Interruption.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Flanagan, for your points of view. Ladies and gentlemen, we're not allowed to applaud.

Thank you also, by the way, for the exemplary behaviour of your two-year-old. He's been quite fabulous.

Mr Flanagan: Thank you. She's just waiting to get into school.

#### JAN SUGERMAN

**The Chair:** Jan Sugerman. Welcome. Thank you very much for coming this morning.

Ms Jan Sugerman: Thank you. I have a cold, and I'm

a little bit hoarse.

The Chair: We have a mike, so you don't have to strain too much. As you settle, I will tell you that you have 10 minutes to make your presentation. If there is any time left over, the committee will ask you some questions.

Ms Sugerman: I can't actually look down and see up

at the same time with these glasses.

My name is Jan Sugerman. I have never done anything quite like this before. I am a parent with two children in

a Toronto public school.

It seems to me that there are many things going on here. Do I talk about process? Do I talk substantively about the bill itself? Do I talk about the common thread

that links them, democracy?

Thinking about democracy and who speaks made me question what I could say when so many are not being allowed to speak. It is my understanding that so far there have been over 1,100 requests to speak to this bill, Bill 104, in Toronto alone. I have been told that the hearings yesterday and today would allow for only 60 individuals to do so. What about the others? It is simply not good enough to suggest that they submit a written deposition. It has been said, and I believe it to be true, that it is important that we meet, you, the members of the government, and I. We look at each other, each one of us — Mr

Doyle, Mr Brown — I cannot see your name, sir, and I don't think you've —

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): Toby Barrett.

Ms Sugerman: — Mr Barrett, Mrs Johns — and I can't read that far away — Mr Carroll, it's important that we look at one another, that we see each other in the flesh. Some part of who we are is really here in this room. This is important. To be heard, and, Mr Brown, visibly so, is important.

I wondered when I was writing this, and still do now as I read it to you, who these people are whose voices are not being heard. I have here copies of some of the requests. Here are some of the names of the people who wish to speak to Bill 104 and are being denied.

Can you tell me what the bell-ringing is about?

The Chair: There's a roll call in the House for quorum.

**Ms Sugerman:** What does this mean for the people sitting here?

The Chair: It means that members of the government are being asked to proceed to the House in order that the business of the House can continue with quorum.

**Ms Sugerman:** That takes precedence over the hearing here?

The Chair: It does not. We continue. We have quorum, and we continue.

Ms Sugerman: We have quorum here. Okay.

Here are some of the names of the people who wish to speak to Bill 104 and are being denied by this government: Patricia White on Delaware in Toronto; Andy Sos on Clinton Street in Toronto; Louise Lambert on Lynd Avenue in Toronto; Pat Brown on Grace Street in Toronto; Scott Forsyth on Markham Street in Toronto; Marlene Vargas on Montrose in Toronto; Mary Pietropaolo on Euclid Avenue — Madam, you'll have to tell me when my time is up.

The Chair: I will.

Ms Sugerman: — Lise Bois on Clinton Street in Toronto; Susan Lukachko on Manning Avenue in Toronto; John Liapis on College Street in Toronto; Sheila Sharp on Palmerston Boulevard in Toronto; Colleen O'Manique on Montrose Avenue in Toronto; Mary Truemner on Clinton Street in Toronto; Sallie Lyons on Manning Avenue in Toronto; Charles Johnston from Pickering; Pamela Bruce on Clinton Street in Toronto; Robin Abraham on Manning Avenue in Toronto; Justine Allan on Leuty Avenue in Toronto; Elizabeth Amer on Ward's Island: Madonna Andras on Ulster Street in Toronto; Robert Atwood on Marchmount Road in Toronto; Meena Arakawa, no address; Don Ballanger on Evelyn Avenue in Toronto; Marie Bamford on Pickering Street in Toronto; Rosa Barker on Concord Avenue in Toronto; Sarah Barker also on Concord Avenue in Toronto; R.E. Barnett on Sussex Avenue in Toronto; Darren Barney on Raglan Avenue in Toronto; Michael Baxter on Royal York Road in Etobicoke; Iain Beaton on Roseneath Gardens in the city of York; Julie Beddoes on Avenue Road in Toronto; Frances Beer on Carlton Street in Toronto; Andrew Bell on Boothroyd Avenue in Toronto; Jean Gilchrist on Albany Avenue in Toronto; James Barry on Kerr Road in Toronto; Chris Berry on Malvern Avenue in Toronto; Robert Biderman on Briar Hill Avenue in Toronto; Ruth Biderman on Alhambra Avenue in Toronto; Anne Black on Morton Road in Toronto; Leanne Black on Shaw Street in Toronto; H. Borden on Strathmore Boulevard in Toronto. Jeff Brendish — I have to read this: "I would like to speak to Bill 104. Democracy?" He lives on Rathburn Road in Mississauga. Steven Bertum on Sackville Place in Toronto; Louise Bridge on Cambridge Avenue in Toronto —

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds left.

Ms Sugerman: Okay. Katie Brock on Cambridge Avenue in Toronto; and J.P. Carver and H.H. Brooks-Hill on Price Street in Toronto. And I didn't even come close. I started into the Cs, I guess.

The Chair: Thank you very much for coming before us and putting that information before the committee. We appreciate your coming.

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## DORETTA WILSON

The Chair: I ask Doretta Wilson to come forward. Mrs Wilson, welcome.

Mrs Doretta Wilson: I have come here today to support the passing of Bill 104. I am a parent of three school-aged children in the Metropolitan Separate School Board.

Ontario is one of the world's largest education spenders, with only mediocre academic results to show for it. Reducing the number of school boards and allowing more local decision-making by school councils can ensure that more education funds actually get spent in the classroom in the most beneficial manner for the student. It's not cuts that hurt kids. It is a lack of clear curricula, ineffective learning programs and unproved pedagogy that hurt and cost more in the long run.

We all have our stories of our own education experiences. My grade 4 class in 1963 had 48 students. Most of us were either newly arrived to Canada or children of immigrants. In my school, the majority were of Italian heritage. English was in most cases not the first language spoken in the home. The separate schools I attended were run on shoestring budgets. Nothing was wasted by the good nuns and lay teachers who taught us. Paper was written on, both sides. Pencils were cut in half and the blackboard was intensively used, just to illustrate a few examples. Yet we all learned well, or none of us would be in the positions we hold here now, including those education bureaucrats who fear the passing of Bill 104.

Today's school budget waste is a common situation. Here's a typical example. At my children's school, the annual operating budget, that is, the amount spent on notebooks, text, paper, supplies and photocopying, but not including salaries or utilities, for instance, amounts to about \$80 per child. Approximately one quarter of that budget, about \$10,000, is for photocopying expenses, and they're already over budget. My children have at one time even glued photocopied sheets on to blank notebook pages. "What's wrong with using the blackboard and have children copy, reinforcing what they learn?" our school council asked. "Oh, that's too time-consuming," was the response.

I think what it is, is a shame. What a wasteful attitude that has developed over the past 30 years. What tunnel vision exists instead of looking for simple, cost-saving strategies. No wonder parents and taxpayers feel powerless to do anything about this sort of situation. There is no accountability when schools treat parent councils just as cookie-baking PTAs. School councils have got to have some clout.

Waste can also have more damaging long-term effects. The "whole language" fiasco promoted by the education gurus has played a large part in bloated school board bureaucracies and the accompanying skyrocketing education costs. If children aren't learning, they will require special education and remedial work. The number of staff involved in special education is mind-boggling. Remedial reading programs such as Reading Recovery, an example of one widely used, are very labour-intensive and therefore very expensive. Multiply this by the layer upon layer of school boards, administrators, consultants, specialists etc, and you get the picture.

If the school boards would implement effective programs and proven teaching methods to begin with, we would not have so many learning-impaired children and the plethora of consultants who follow. It's time to throw out the leeches and reach for the penicillin. This province can no longer afford to let the current situation continue. There is plenty of money for education, but it is not being spent wisely. Years of mismanagement by school boards have taken their toll. The long-term cost of poor learning is unemployment and accompanying poverty.

The incident of the 10-year-old boy confronting the Minister of Education on the first day of these hearings really bothered me. The boy complained that there are 32 students in his class. However, there are now 37 students in my 10-year-old daughter's class; it had been as high as 39 at the start of the school year, but I'm not here to complain about the size of her class. What distressed me the most is that again our children are the bargaining chips. Class size has been used as one of the red herrings by various groups opposed to education reform.

I feel that teachers' federations are opposed to Bill 104 in the self-righteous delusion that their primary area of concern is for the students. But a union's primary concern has to be for the welfare of its members, or it is not carrying out its fundamental mandate. The status quo is too good for them to give up. If school boards are reduced, what happens to all those consultants and administrators who also happen to be members of those federations? Who really cares about whom? I'm tired of my children being held for ransom.

One of the fundamentals of my faith is that parents are the primary educators of their children. School advisory councils will be crucial to ensure this. They will be the most effective way, outside of the home, that all parents can make sure they have a legitimate voice in the education of their children at the level most directly affecting them en masse, at the school level. School councils exist to provide a forum for input, discussion and advice on individual school community needs.

Where paranoia about Fascist parents taking over schools began, I can only suspect and probably won't

have far to look. I have read that one of the co-chairs of the Royal Commission on Learning does not think school councils will work. Sorry, Mr Caplan; just helping with homework is not enough. Ontario's poor academic showing, both nationwide and worldwide, proves this.

School councils also exist to make sure that education administrators are accountable to us, the school community. They do not undermine democracy. Council members are elected: parents by parents, teachers by teachers. They are accountable to the school because they are elected.

The community at large will still elect trustees. School

boards are not being eliminated.

If you truly care about quality education for our children, I know you will support the passing of Bill 104. It may be the only way for our children to receive the resources required in a fair, efficient and effective manner.

The Chair: Ms Wilson, we have three minutes left for questions, one minute per caucus. We begin with the

government caucus.

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): You brought up the idea of the cost of supplies. To put it on the record, and for people's edification, based on figures supplied to me for a school board in Toronto, a Metro school board, one that is separate — I won't identify which — spends \$149 per student on supplies; the other spends \$361 per student on supplies. That kind of proves your point that maybe there is some waste there.

Mrs Wilson: There definitely is waste. I've seen it

first hand.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Thank you for your presentation, Mrs Wilson. I'm a teacher with 30 years' experience, and I've had occasion to question expenditures by school boards and by governments. The one I question with regard to 104 is the enormous expenditure that's going to have to take place to set up the Education Improvement Commission.

Do you have problems with the government spending \$88,000 per co-chair, and there will be five to seven members at a salary that still hasn't been finalized, and they in turn will set up education improvement committees; the numbers we don't know, the costs, we don't

know -

Mrs Wilson: Are you making a statement or asking me a question?

Mr Bartolucci: I'm asking you a question. Are you

concerned about that?

Mrs Wilson: No, I have no problem with that if it means long-term, cost-effective savings for the children. I'm tired of money not getting to the kids in the classroom.

**Mr Bartolucci:** And you honestly believe as a parent that's going to impact positively on your child's education? Does your child have a full-time librarian at school?

Mrs Wilson: Yes.

**Mr Bartolucci:** Do they have extracurricular activities?

Mrs Wilson: No. My children go to a Metro separate school. We have very little of anything.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Bartolucci. I'll pass it to

the third party.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Thank you for coming today. I have four kids in elementary school in

Sault Ste Marie and I don't share your pessimistic view of the system as it is now. Certainly there is room for change and room for improvement. My wife, who spends more time at home than I do, spends a lot of time interacting with the school and working with various groups and volunteering.

One of the concerns we have, sincerely, is the size of the classrooms. You mentioned yourself being in a

classroom of 48 or something?

Mrs Wilson: That's right.

Mr Martin: Are you suggesting that we go back to

Mrs Wilson: No, I didn't suggest that at all. There are studies to show what effective class sizes are. It's not so much the size of the class; it's what's being taught and how it gets taught. Obviously, most of us went through those kinds of classrooms. We are learned, or else you wouldn't be here if you didn't learn how to read and write well. It's how and what the kids are being taught. There are kids in classes with 20 children and they still can't read and write any better than children in classes of larger sizes.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Wilson, for bringing your concern to this committee and for taking

the time to be here.

#### SUSAN McGRATH

The Chair: Susan McGrath? Ms McGrath, welcome to our committee. We're looking forward to your presentation

Mrs Susan McGrath: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'll be coming from a bit of a different point of view from our previous speaker today. I live and work in the city of Toronto. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today to speak with you. Although I'm addressing the committee from my own perspective, I hope that some of my concerns about Bill 104 will correspond to the concerns of those many individuals who also wanted to address this committee but have so far been denied the

opportunity to do so.

As a parent, I would like to state that my child received an excellent secondary school education in the Toronto public school system, a system which is now threatened by the provisions of Bill 104. As a homeowner, although I enjoy living in the city of Toronto where I have been a resident for 35 years, I have serious concerns arising from the impact of Bill 103, another piece of legislation being considered, and I'm equally concerned about the impact of the proposed downloading on the quality of life in my city. However, I would like to speak today not as a parent nor as a resident, but as a citizen who's strongly committed to the tenets of a democratic society and as a long-term employee in the public sector, including the public libraries and the public school system in Toronto.

As a citizen, I have participated in democratic political processes, mainly at election time through door-to-door canvassing. However, until this January I have never felt so passionate about political issues. This government, by proposing to shatter fundamental democratic processes and institutions at the local level in both Bills 103 and 104, has awakened many people such as myself who have

occasionally been involved with political action and many more who have never been politically active at all. The government, I hope, will pay attention to the voters from all political parties and different walks of life who are working together to stop this government from pushing through Bills 103, 104 and downloading. If the government has achieved anything positive at all, it has been to create a powerful new opposition to its policies.

What do I think is wrong with the Fewer School Boards Act? First, Bill 104 makes a mockery of meaningful elected representation at the school board level in Metropolitan Toronto. It reduces the number of elected trustees in Metro Toronto from 74 to 22 and limits trustee reimbursement to a maximum honorarium of \$5,000 a vear. The Ministry of Education and Training's own backgrounder on Bill 104 states that "trustees will no longer take home the equivalent of a full-time salary." As a result, trustees will be working fewer hours while at the same time responding to a larger number of constituents. In fact, the proposed Toronto mega-board will be the largest in Canada, serving 2.3 million people, the same size population as the much-touted Alberta. In Metropolitan Toronto, trustees will be responsible for 310,000 students and 550 schools. This is not a doable job and I think the government knows it.

Second, Bill 104 removes financial control from publicly elected school board trustees. School boards will have no say in the basic education programs which will be determined at the provincial level and no ability to add programs beyond the basic level. Local communities will have no control over the education their children receive. The position of school trustee, which has provided many women and other representatives from disadvantaged groups and communities with opportunities for political participation and leadership, will become irrelevant. With such low compensation, the position of trustee will revert again to candidates who for the most part come from higher income levels.

Third, Bill 104 shifts real power away from local school boards and gives it to the province, establishing for four years an undemocratic and unaccountable Education Improvement Commission. This provincially appointed commission will have decision-making power over restructuring and school board operations during the transition to what the bill calls the "new system of education governance in Ontario," including control of budgets and staffing, distribution of board property and other assets and consideration of outsourcing of all non-teaching functions. The Education Improvement Commission is exempt from the Regulations Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act and its decisions are final and shall not be reviewed or questioned by a court and its members are protected from liability.

This government, if Bill 104 is passed, will have the power to plunder and pillage the educational system with impunity, and that is what I am convinced it will do. This government does not have a vision of education for Ontario which would encourage me to think otherwise, nor does it have a record which would foster trust in its motives nor support for its methods.

In July 1995 at a staff briefing, the Minister of Education and Training was videotaped saying: "Yeah, we need to invent a crisis and that is just not an act of courage. There's some skill involved." Bill 104 is predicated on an artificially created crisis which goes like this: The public education system is failing, it's out of control. The government's solution is for a provincial takeover, I would say a hostile takeover, through Bill 104.

Of course the need to improve the education system is something that trustees, education workers, students and parents acknowledge and are actively prepared to support. Positive change is welcome but a wholesale dismantling of the present system is uncalled for.

Further, the minister has stated that cuts to the amount of \$1 billion are necessary to improve elementary and secondary education, a bit of an oxymoron I think in that statement. The minister also states that a new funding formula based on equal per pupil spending across the province with some exceptions for special needs will be developed. This new funding formula has not yet been announced, nor does the legislation identify essential school programs and services.

The Ernst and Young report, announced on January 10, changed the criteria for what should be classified as "outside the classroom." Now we've got outside-the-classroom teacher preparation time, school librarians, guidance counsellors, other professional support such as psychologists, custodial and maintenance services, and the list goes on and on.

The reality is that the system at the present time is lacking the resources in many areas to address issues faced by disadvantaged communities and families in Toronto. If the government's vision of education in this province prevails, our schools will return to the past, perhaps to the days of Enoch Turner Schoolhouse, the location which the minister chose to announce changes to the educational system.

I believe that was a good choice. The Enoch Turner Schoolhouse symbolizes the government's vision of education. At present it's a museum which provides us with an opportunity to study the inequities of the past. It was built in 1848 to provide a free school to the Irish Protestant poor who attended Little Trinity Church. The donor for all this was Enoch Turner, a wealthy brewer, the John Labatt of his day — perhaps we need a John Labatt Public School in Toronto — who erected it at his own expense. It was a one-room schoolhouse when it opened and it provided one instructor and 80 writing desks for a total of 240 pupils. It was a church charity school but may be the "back to the future" model which the minister has in mind when the cuts begin.

Working at the Toronto Board of Education, staff are aware of reductions in educational spending, and the figure being talked about is between \$1,700 to \$2,000 in annual cuts per pupil or a 25% cut to educational funding. These cuts will wreak havoc with programs which promote opportunity for disadvantaged students and which meet special needs. Close to 20% of our elementary students live in poverty. Our board serves over 76 different language groups of students in our schools. Twelve per cent of our budget supports children with needs such as the provision of breakfast programs, reading clinic teachers and social workers.

According to the Toronto Star, Metro has the highest per pupil spending in the province due to a "huge percentage of immigrant children." We have adult education classes and continuing education classes which provide an opportunity for people to continue their secondary education, to learn new skills and to break out of the cycle of poverty and dependency in which they live. We have English-as-a-second-language programs for newcomers to the country. We have anti-discrimination and anti-harassment programs aimed at eliminating racism and sexism within the system and promoting gender and race equity. Our system provides quality education while ensuring that each citizen of the city has equality of educational opportunity, and this government is putting this system at risk.

In closing, I would like to remind the committee members and the government that our current system of education, although it needs improvement, still serves us well. It is a democratic system of governance and finance based on locally elected trustees with taxing powers. These trustees are directly accountable to the voters. The system is flexible, responding to the needs of local communities. In a city with the diversity of Toronto, the educational system has continued to be committed to the provision of equality of educational opportunity for all citizens. It is funded at the present time without grants from the province.

On the other hand, the system contained in Bill 104 and what can be gleaned from the minister's remarks will destabilize, demoralize and impoverish our educational traditions and create a two-tiered education system where those who are most in need will be the least served. I would hope that this committee would recommend to the government to reconsider the massive reorganization of the school boards of Ontario, to slow down, to disclose fully its restructuring proposals and to allow for full and complete consultation on all of the issues.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs McGrath. You've fully used your 10 minutes. We appreciate your views and the time that you took to come here.

# VALERIE McDONALD

The Chair: Next is Valerie McDonald. Welcome to the committee. We're pleased to have you here.

Ms Valerie McDonald: My name is Valerie McDonald. I am the mother of three girls, two of whom attend Palmerston school here in Toronto and one who had the good fortune to be able to register for junior kindergarten yesterday. I am a founding member of People for Education, a group dedicated to preserving publicly funded education in Ontario.

I have come today to speak on behalf of my eldest daughter, Madeleine. Madeleine is eight years old, in grade 3. She has severe learning disabilities that affect her speech and fine and gross motor skills.

Madeleine struggles to express herself with halting speech and words that mysteriously elude her even though she knows them well. Printing is a slow and painstaking activity for her. Even her drawing has only just moved beyond what is known as the pinhead stage: large heads and long legs and no bodies. However, a

couple of weeks ago, we all celebrated because she finally learned to zip up her own coat.

Madeleine has worked hard to develop her skills since she was a preschooler. She received occupational therapy at the Hospital for Sick Children twice a week for two and a half years and got blocks of speech therapy there as well. Once she started school, she got extra help from the Learning Centre, from an educational assistant assigned to her half-time and from the school speech therapist. Now in grade 3, she is in a half-time learning disabilities class at Palmerston with eight students. In the afternoon she is in a regular class with the children she has known since junior kindergarten.

All the extra attention has paid off. She can read at close to grade level and now prints with increased confidence. She participates in class discussions and talks enthusiastically at home about themes of study like food groups or the Arctic. She loves school.

I am very concerned that Bill 104 will adversely affect students like Madeleine, and if students like her are not served well, my other two children, who by comparison seem to learn almost effortlessly, will not receive a good education either because their teachers will be too overwhelmed with meeting the needs of the Madeleines in their classes.

Bill 104 drastically reduces the numbers of trustees who act as advocates for children like Madeleine and who oversee the distribution of services throughout a board. Local school councils are not an acceptable replacement for democratically elected trustees because they don't necessarily care about the needs of all the children in a school. The Education Improvement Commission gives a small number of non-elected officials unprecedented power to change or eliminate programs that will benefit a child like my daughter.

I know we're very lucky to have received such extensive services for Madeleine. However, even in a resourcerich board like Toronto, we had to fight to get every single one of those resources for her. At the end of her kindergarten year, we were frustrated with our IPRC meeting at which board officials seemed very reluctant to provide special education services to Madeleine. They tried to allay our fears about her being lost in a busy grade 1 classroom with talk about how young she was to be separated even part-time from her peers and how important it was to preserve her self-esteem. We wanted concrete services to help her learn. Finally, I called my local trustee who responded immediately and acted as an advocate for Madeleine. She gave us information about the services available, told us who in the board to speak to and outlined the procedures to follow to appeal the IPRC decision. Eventually we got the appropriate services that have since helped her enormously.

At a recent meeting at our school, someone asked a representative of the Ministry of Education to describe the job function of a trustee under Bill 104. The official replied that trustees will provide the same service they do now. Her example was that if your child is sick, you can call the trustee and he or she will help you arrange to have your child's homework sent home.

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Bill 104 proposes to amalgamate all the Toronto boards, creating a new board with a population the size

of Alberta. There will be one trustee representing 13,500 students. I don't expect them to arrange the delivery of homework, but will they still be able to act as effective advocates for children like Madeleine? Will I even get through to them in the first place, or will it be like calling the voice mail maze of the Ministry of Education?

Perhaps school councils are meant to supplement the work now done by trustees. Bill 104 says that local needs will be addressed by these volunteer bodies. Will this body be able to advocate for services for my daughter? My suspicion is that they will be busy doing even more fund-raising for the extras like computers, library books, art supplies and musical instruments, which seem to be considered non-classroom expenses by Mr Snobelen. As an active member of my home and school, I'm tired of fund-raising. I'd rather pay my taxes and spend my time helping my children learn.

Last summer on a visit to England I spent a day in a high school in downtown Manchester. Many of the reforms suggested in Bill 104 have already been implemented in Manchester, including the introduction of local councils. When I asked how well the local councils were working, my friend, who taught at the school, said it was a real problem to find parents to sit on the councils in the poorer neighbourhoods. They either did not speak English well enough or were too overwhelmed by their own problems to be able to attend meetings that required a huge time commitment and a willingness to grapple with complex issues. In his own neighbourhood, however, local councils worked hard to raise lots of money to supplement the school-based budgets to provide the very best for their children. A lot of energy was also put into marketing each school in order to increase enrollment and thus increase the total school budget, which was based on a per pupil grant.

I am not opposed to amalgamation per se or even to somewhat reducing the number of trustees. However, Bill 104 goes much too far. It creates a fundamental change in the way education is structured and delivered in Ontario. Locally elected trustees, who are compensated for their work, will act as advocates for all children and will be overseers of a whole system. School councils will look out only for the children in their schools. As I saw in Manchester, we will soon have a two-tiered public education system in Ontario, with wealthy neighbourhoods offering the kinds of programs we all take for granted now and poorer neighbourhoods struggling with inadequate resources and demoralized teachers.

I know the intention behind the legislation is purported to be to reduce waste at the administrative level and to equalize services across the province. I applaud that intention; however, I don't believe it.

I have spoken to many parents across Ontario who have suffered greatly from recent provincial management of education spending. The \$400 million cut from the education budget over the last year has already affected the classroom. Music programs, junior kindergarten, bussing, phys ed and library programs have been slashed, and special education support is usually the first program to go.

To cite one example, in Gravenhurst a few weeks ago all of the teaching assistants were laid off. There is now an autistic child in one school who spends the day wandering the halls instead of sitting in class learning. That could be my daughter. Madeleine is too well behaved to wander the halls, but without her learning disabilities class and her assistant to guide her she would likely sit idle in the classroom doing nothing.

Perhaps the most disturbing element of Bill 104 is the Education Improvement Commission. This appointed body of five to seven people will have the power to strip existing boards of their decision-making powers, to monitor their actions, control their budgets, transfer staff and facilitate the privatization of non-teaching services. In essence, this means that boards with well-developed services for special needs children may no longer be able to provide these services, regardless of need.

I am deeply concerned that the Education Improvement Commission's decisions will supersede existing legislation and cannot be challenged in court. Besides being fundamentally undemocratic, what recourse will I have for my daughter if existing legislation about special education is changed or eliminated?

Today in the Legislature Mr Snobelen said that Bill 104 is about reducing waste and streamlining services. But educating a child or an adult is a complex activity that involves many complex human relationships and costly resources.

The Chair: May I ask you to wrap up, please.

Ms McDonald: Okay. The government's legacy in reducing and streamlining over the past year has resulted in lost programs, lost resources and lost children. However, it is not too late to restore adequate funding to our children. When the province sets its per pupil rate, I certainly hope it will look to boards that provide well for special needs students like my daughter. Spending money on Madeleine enriches all the students in the class by providing additional resources that help the Madeleines learn while the freeing the classroom teacher to spend more time with all the children.

As a final note, I must say that at \$6,000 or even \$8,000 a year per pupil, public education is a bargain. Private school fees for a child like Madeleine range from \$12,000 to \$18,000 a year. Think about it.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms McDonald. I regret that the time just seems to fly. We appreciate your views and thank you for bringing us your story. Don't forget your picture.

#### SIM BRIGDEN

The Chair: Next is Sim Brigden. Welcome.

**Mr Sim Brigden:** I appreciate the opportunity to speak today. Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Sim Brigden. I am currently chair of the Davisville Public School Parents Association. I am also fund-raising committee chair, and I sit on the school staffing committee.

I am very pleased to see that the government is finally doing something about the situation in the public school system. For the last four years, I have been working to ensure that the goals of my school board, the Toronto Board of Education, are refocused on promoting quality

of education and excellence in the classroom; it seems that the board has other ideas.

From meetings with school trustees, superintendents, Chairman David Moll and the comptroller of finance, Ron Trbovitch, I can only conclude that the board's primary agenda is to promote its own bloated bureaucracy. The ratio of board staff to classroom teachers remains the highest in Metropolitan Toronto, at nearly two to one. While teachers are dipping into their own pockets to pay for classroom supplies, the board cranks out reams of useless reports about issues which have little or nothing to do with improving education.

From my interpretation of Bill 104, it seems that the Education Improvement Commission will oversee the amalgamation and subsequent election procedures during the transitional period of all school boards in Ontario. The proposed commission will have broad powers to investigate any and all matters fiscal and to control spending during this period. This aspect of the bill is essential. It is imperative that control be wrested from the current boards. They have no incentive whatsoever to trim their budgets, reduce duplication or eliminate waste. What follows from this is the focus of my concerns and one of the reasons I am here today.

Governance of spending at the board level after amalgamation should be entrenched in the bill as well. Annual, external audits with standardized accounting procedures are a must. Currently we taxpayers, despite direct questions to trustees, board staff and superintendents, cannot get a straight answer about such basic information as how many classroom teachers are employed by the board, nor can we accurately tell how many staff are in each department at the board offices. This obfuscation appears deliberate, so that the board can tout the large number of teachers it has on staff, but not necessarily in the classroom, and thereby justify its bloated budget.

In December 1996 I attended a meeting with Chairman Moll and Mr Trbovitch where Mr Moll expressed his shock and disbelief at the province's proposed legislation. At the end of the meeting, Mr Trbovitch said to me publicly, "Oh, yeah, I could have cut 15% from this year's budget, no problem." I was astounded. Here was the person in charge of finance admitting that there was overspending yet admonishing the provincial government because of the restraints that were coming.

Members, from what I can ascertain, Bill 104 does not go nearly far enough to ensure that past overexpenditures and fiscal malpractice are not repeated; it does not entrench fiscal responsibility as a cornerstone of creating a better educational system. I would like to ask you to review the clauses of the bill pertaining to board fiscal and spending procedures and amend them to include permanent rules with regard to spending, external audits and budget approvals.

My second issue concerns classroom size. During their tenure, the provincial Liberal government set a proposed ceiling on class size at 25 students per teacher. Despite good intentions, this measure did not work. The boards worked around the ceiling by including library, phys ed, music and French teachers in this total. What evolved

was that the home-room classes did not shrink and formulae were developed by which staffing models are now driven. The current situation is untenable.

For your perusal, I have attached copies of information given to me by Superintendent Sandy Thompson. This is a spreadsheet showing the ranges and counts of current class sizes in the Toronto elementary system. If I can just explain the spreadsheet, across the top it shows the number of students in a class, and then down one side it shows the type of class: junior kindergarten, mixed classes, right through to grade 8. You'll see that the range runs from 11 students at the lowest level right up to an astounding 36 students in some classes. This is all because of the current model they're using. It's wrong.

I would like to propose the following amendments to Bill 104:

That home-room class sizes be limited to 20 at the junior level of grade school and 25 at the senior levels of grade school and high school.

That library, phys ed, music, French, ESL and learning centre be treated as separate scholastic entities, and others where need be, each of these being allocated resources based on each school's curriculum and student population; and that they be staffed according to formulae determined by a guaranteed minimum minutes of instruction per student per subject per year. What I'm trying to say here is that if there are special needs, if there are special concerns, we allocate those on a guaranteed number of minutes per student per year, so we staff accordingly.

That principals be given complete and full jurisdiction in matters relating to staffing. This would ensure that principals would be held accountable with regard to local staffing issues and problems. It would also free them to select the best teachers available from the teaching pool for their particular school's needs.

That principals should be held accountable to their boards and parents' associations should they fail to perform adequately. Currently, the Toronto Board of Education boasts that we have the most open staffing procedure in the GTA and possibly anywhere. They have this whole rigamarole that you go through to be involved in a staffing committee; it's unbelievable. The reality is that at the school level the staff have final say on the staffing model. Furthermore, the teacher allocation formula is lorded over by a board-appointed committee, which, again, is half comprised of teachers. The upshot of all this is that the staff are managing the staffing. There is virtually no latitude left for the local school staffing committee to influence a decision, and there should be. The lunatics are running the asylum.

Fundamentally, I believe we need a sea change in our educational system, which has lost focus, direction and initiative. The current system is rife with waste, duplication, overspending, political nepotism and sloth. It caters so much to special interest groups that the basic goals of education have been lost in a swamp of self-serving empire-building. Children are losing precious learning time under the current regime. I talked with one of the parents at the school who comes from Iran, and he said: "I can't believe the slow pace at which my child is learning. In grade 1 back home, she was doing cursive

writing. That doesn't occur in our school board until grade 3"

I can only laud your efforts to correct the myriad problems facing us and trust that you can entertain my request to do even more. I thank you for your time in considering my request.

Mr Bartolucci: Thank you very much for your presentation, Sim. I introduced a private member's bill called the Smaller Class Sizes Act, which limits the number of pupils who can be in each class, depending on what level of instruction you're looking at. The government, by and large, opposed the measure. However, there were a few individuals on the government side who saw, as you do, the need for smaller class sizes and supported

class size is an integral part of excellence in education?

Mr Brigden: I do, very much so. However, I haven't read the particulars of your bill, sir, so I don't know that I could comment on it.

it. It has now passed second reading and it has been

referred to this committee. Do you not feel that smaller

Mr Bartolucci: Let me tell you the numbers because I think they're important. They are 17 at the junior and senior kindergarten sizes, 23 at the primary level, 26 at the junior levels, which are 4, 5 and 6, 28 at the intermediate level, which is grades 7 and 8, and then depending on the high school course, they diminish from 29 to 20 from advanced to basic level courses. Do you not see that as an opportunity to promote the excellence that you're talking about?

**Mr Brigden:** I think that would be of interest.

Mr Martin: Thank you for coming today and making your presentation. I'm a father of four children in the school system in Sault Ste Marie, and I don't share your cynicism about the system. You paint actually quite a disturbing picture. Certainly my experience of the people who run the system in my community and the people who work in it — and I spend a fair bit of time visiting and I know my wife, because she's home more than I am these days, spends a lot of time in the school where my children go to school. Even though there are things that need to be improved and can be changed and everybody's working at that, she doesn't paint the same picture that you've painted here today of those people.

Are you saying to us that all of the people in education out there today are as you describe them in your presentation? I think some of the words you used were quite descriptive. Is that truthfully your view of the system out

there today?

Mr Brigden: I have been trying for four years to get the board to, first, open up its budgeting process so we know how their money is spent. We don't even know how that's done. Mr Trbovitch is a very capable person with his budgeting process. Second, I'm very fortunate. I have a school at Davisville where we're lucky to have a good set of teachers and an excellent principal. They're not getting the support they require from the board. The board is more of a hindrance than an asset to them. You may be most fortunate in Sault Ste Marie in having a better board than we do. We don't have a good board in Toronto. It doesn't care about us.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): Thank you very much for coming. I really appreciate your comments

and you certainly are involved, as you stated here, in your school. I would assume that you would appreciate more parent involvement in the school system across Ontario. What advice could you give us to enhance the school councils across the province?

Mr Brigden: I think the first thing is that right now it's very difficult to get names of other parents who are at the school. That would be a very modest first step. Certainly for us, you have to sort of go around back rooms to get it. These are things that should be available to the various school committees so that they can get more involvement going. That's a very meagre but essential first step.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Brigden, for being here today and sharing your views with us. We as

a committee appreciate it.

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## JOHN DOHERTY

The Chair: Next is John Doherty. Welcome. We're pleased to have you here with us.

Mr John Doherty: Thank you for the opportunity to make this presentation this afternoon. My name is John Doherty and I am a trustee for wards 11 and 12 in the city of Toronto. I have been elected to this position for

three consecutive terms.

While there are many important aspects of the bill that I would like to comment on, finance is the most important issue. Bill 104 removes the boards of education's right to the property tax base. With this change, the single most important way parents and local community members can influence school policy is removed. Local boards of education have used their access to the tax base to develop programs that best suit the needs of each school. In Toronto we have used our tax base to meet a wide variety of educational needs. These programs have contributed in a significant way to the quality of life in the city.

Schools have become the community hub. They are the centre of the lives of the neighbourhood's children. They are the place where local community associations can meet. Immigrants can get a start in their new life by learning English. Seniors can take a course which keeps them in touch with the world around them. The school is often the local park. The local child care centre or parenting centre supports the families in a cost-effective manner. These all contribute to a safe and vibrant community.

These programs are all threatened. Even if the Minister of Education only goes partway down the road of the cuts he has talked about, my community stands to lose many valuable programs. The Minister of Education and his parliamentary assistant have repeatedly stated over the past year that we overspend by \$500 to \$600 per pupil in this province, even though this is a figure that has already been discredited as it does not include Ontario in that calculation of a national average.

If we are to take him at his word and fund all students equally, the schools in my ward will be devastated. What this will mean to the 15 schools in my ward is a loss of over \$7 million, potentially the equivalent of 128 teachers. Tell me this will not hurt the classroom. And

this is not the worst-case scenario. These types of cuts will be made after the administration has been completely eliminated.

These calculations are based on the assumption that when the Minister of Education and his parliamentary assistants are speaking in public, they are being straightforward and honest. I challenge the government members to provide an answer to the government numbers and to tell the parents and students what your real plan is for education.

The real problem is that government is asking the public to buy the stripping of school boards' right to decide their own budget and raise taxes without showing them the new funding formula or the level of funding they are willing to commit to the system.

I believe the position of the Metro school board is the correct position. The government should withdraw this legislation until it can show the people of Ontario how the system will be funded and how the government plans to meet its commitment to protect the classroom. This position of the Metro school board was adopted unanimously by trustees from across all political parties and across all six municipalities in Metro.

Parents and students need a guarantee that the current classroom supports and class size will be there after the

funding change, at a minimum.

Bill 104 provides the government with such sweeping powers that it need not return to the Legislature for any further amendments to the education system. Any other changes the government may want to pursue in the future will not have to undergo the scrutiny of the House or the public. This is both dangerous and undemocratic.

Why does the Minister of Education need the power to override any act of the House or any other part of the Education Act? What is the government afraid of? If your proposals for change are so good, why do you need section 349 of the Fewer School Boards Act, which allows the minister to override any other piece of legislation? There can be no defence for such a section of the

Parents across wards 11 and 12, and indeed parents across the city, are appalled that programs that have met the needs of their children could be wiped out with such little debate and discussion. Attempts to get government or ministry representatives out to public meetings have been nearly impossible. Is this what parents are to expect in the future when trustees are an afterthought in the educational system and power is centralized in Queen's Park?

What makes the government so sure that a highly centralized Mowat Block bureaucracy has all the answers? Despite the best-meaning civil servant in Queen's Park, and I know there are many, they cannot possibly shape a one-size-fits-all education system for a province as diverse as Ontario. The changes in Bill 104 will strip local communities of any ability to mould the school system to the local environment. The all-knowing Mowat Block will be the source of all power.

The government should heed its own direction to the classroom teacher: Let's establish some benchmarks for a revamped school system; let's set out some measurable goals for ourselves; let's look at the supports needed to achieve these goals; let's look at time lines for getting

Some modest goals would be smaller class sizes in our elementary school system. We could set out a goal of a well-supplied library for each school; students coming to school prepared to learn — we need nutrition programs; develop a strong early childhood education program for all young students; commit ourselves to a system that develops a love of reading, writing, music and math at an early age; set some targets for reducing levels of illiteracy among our entire population; commit ourselves to a goal of increasing our graduation rates; commit ourselves to meeting the educational needs of all our special needs students in a setting that is appropriate to their learning abilities. Above all, let's commit ourselves to a school system that meets the needs of the students and the learners, not a short-term political agenda.

Our education can be so much more that an educational ledger sheet. As one teacher asked me last week: "Let's have these people who are making these decisions and voting on these issues come visit my class for a week. Let them see the successes and challenges our

school system faces every day."

If you take up this challenge, you will know you cannot call our system "broken." You will see a system working hard to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. It's time you slowed down and listened to what the parents are really saying, not what you want to hear.

We in Toronto and in Ontario can be proud of what we have built in almost 200 years. No system is perfect. No system guided by politicians and run by people will ever be perfect. Can we do better? You better believe it.

Is the system broken? Absolutely not.

In closing, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to make this presentation this afternoon. All members of this committee need to carefully look at the things we've been able to do together. Education is too important for the instant quick fixes Bill 104 sets out. Please, let's take the time and build something stronger, not something we will live to regret for another generation.

The Chair: Mr Doherty. You've used up all of your time. We thank you for coming and sharing your views

with us.

#### JANET ALLEN

The Chair: Janet Allen is next. Welcome, Ms Allen, to our committee.

Ms Janet Allen: Thank you for letting me speak today. My name is Janet Allen. I'm a teacher. I'm also a parent of a very young little girl who's not ready to go to school. I'm a secondary school ESL teacher at Winston Churchill Collegiate Institute in Scarborough. Typical of Scarborough, our school is comprised of 10% to 15% ESL students from all over the world; 55% of the school's students speak a language other than English, with 42 languages in total at Churchill; 35% have been in Canada less than five years.

I enjoy my job, and I look forward to seeing my students, who are for the most part eager to learn. My classes are essentially multilevel as, despite the designated grades of English competency, there is a wide range of abilities in spoken, aural and written English. I have adolescents ranging from 14 to 19, as well as adults as old as 42, and that's in just one of my classes. Some adolescent students have few school skills, while others have little general knowledge, usually because of interrupted schooling due to war, poor standards in their own country or poverty.

My students come from China, Taiwan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Lebanon, Poland and Somalia. It is challenging, but I enjoy the diversity, their enthusiasm, positive energy and exposing them to Canadian culture. Because of this diversity in cultures, ages and abilities, I must have a plan of what I

want them to accomplish every day.

In a semestered system, time is tight. Plans and objectives are crucial. What plan have I mapped out for the term so that they can comprehend and successfully pass the unit, acquiring the necessary skills along the way? What plan have I developed for the semester so all these students, with their varied abilities, cognitive or affective, can walk away from my class with a more sophisticated level of English and succeed in other classes?

1720

Plans are important, and in Bill 104 I see no plan. other than a fiscal one. How will ESL students in my class, students in our school, in Scarborough, in Metro, in the province, benefit from this fiscally based piece of legislation? Does this bill plan to improve the quality of education? If so, then why remove the library and the teacher-librarians, who understand educational pedagogy. where my students frequently are found accessing resources, using computers, renewing books? Does this bill plan to improve the quality of education? Then how can music be left unscathed, unaffected by these cuts? I learned to play the cello in school and am able now to pass on that skill to others at Churchill. How can extracurricular sports be left unaffected by these cuts? These are all necessities in a healthy school environment and give many an opportunity they wouldn't normally have.

This bill proposes to improve accountability. How will I describe this word to my students? Are they widgets? Shall I ignore their abilities and needs, throw away well-thought-out, formative, summative assessments and outcomes, regress to the 1960s and teach solely to the test? My head is spinning as I see Bill 104 sliding down a very steep, slippery slope, with educators and students

falling quickly behind.

How will I convince my students, even non-ESL students at Churchill, to have their parents become involved in a parent council? This is outrageous when parent turnout at parent-teacher afternoon and night is 20% on a good day; these are Canadian families, struggling, frequently working shifts. ESL parents are another story entirely. Despite our efforts with translators, parent turnout is poor. If they are in the country, they're often too frightened or too busy trying to keep their heads above water. These parents see school as a separate world, a world where their input would be considered aggressive, essentially beyond their imagination. The parents who do become involved are so minimal and they have their own agenda: their kids. An objective body, above a parent council, is critical.

If boards of education are vaporized, can I be sure my students will be safe in school? Scarborough's zero tolerance policy has been very successful in reducing weapons. How can my students be guaranteed a feeling of safety? Some kids are afraid, those with and without weapons. Their abilities to resolve conflicts successfully are unsophisticated, despite teacher instruction. I do not believe this is a problem special to Metro.

Finally, how will I describe to my students the education review commission, a power-wielding force of five to seven people who may retain expert services to assist it in its work? Who are these experts anyway? A select number of exclusive bureaucrats, quickly working their way to nervous breakdowns due to job overload. An unelected group of people busily forging a chunnel to destinations unknown. The work this commission has to do is overwhelming and frightening, butmost importantly, it lacks vision; it lacks a plan.

Our province is so diverse, so complex, and our schools should reflect that. Schools must give students a level playing field in order to achieve. How will Bill 104

do this? Thank you for your time.

Mr Martin: I share your enthusiasm about the system we have in place now. As I've said before this afternoon, I have four children in the system in elementary school, and they are really excited about school. They're learning a lot, and I'm hoping they will continue to be able to do that. It's valuable that you focused today on some of the things you have, because we sometimes forget that when we look at the bigger picture.

The sense is that the product we're producing is mediocre. Certainly that's not my experience of it in the school system. Is there anything in your experience that indicates that is in fact what we're producing at this point

in our system?

Ms Allen: My only concern is class size. Mr Bartolucci has mentioned that. That's a main concern. I think there is room for improvement; I would never say that there isn't. That would be foolish. But the problem of improving has always been a contentious one in government, and it seems to change every five years—OSIS outcomes and now what? I don't know. It feels like a make-work project sometimes. But I would say class size is an issue.

Mr Carroll: Thank you for your presentation. On page 2 you ask a question: "Does this bill plan to improve the quality of education? If so, then why remove the library and the teacher-librarians?" Where in this bill is that even mentioned?

**Ms Allen:** I'm being provocative. I'm assuming, because of various things that have been said by Mr Snobelen, that might be a problem because of what is considered classroom and what is considered not classroom essentials.

Mr Carroll: But nowhere have we suggested removing teacher-librarians and librarians, have we? We've never suggested that anywhere.

Ms Allen: Perhaps not in a bill but perhaps outside.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): You are quite right, that in the \$6 billion described as out-of-classroom expenditure, and therefore somehow seen as being ripe ground for finding \$1 billion, teacher-librarians were in that out-of-classroom group.

Ms Allen: That's right.

Mrs McLeod: There's another figure that is often used by the minister, and that is that we're 10% above the national average in our spending per student. I think in fact we are about 2% above the national average in our spending per student, and that's equivalent to about \$165 per student. I wonder if you feel that being 2% above the national average is justifiable, given the particular challenges you face as a teacher in Ontario and in Toronto.

Ms Allen: Certainly in Metro. I understand the inequities in the province, but in Metro there are many needs in terms of ESL. As I've mentioned, some of the people I have in my class do require a lot of attention, and it's not just a language problem, it's a social problem as well, because of where they come from and the things that are happening in other parts of the world.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Allen, for being

with us and sharing your views.

### MAIA RYZYJ

The Chair: Maia Ryzyj? Welcome. Thank you for being here today. You have 10 minutes for your presentation.

Ms Maia Ryzyj: My name is Maia Ryzyj. I'm a grade 13 student, an OAC student, at Holy Name of Mary. It's a secondary school in Mississauga.

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): My alma mater.

Ms Ryzyj: I've been following the actions of the Ontario government for quite some time. What I've seen so far, I have liked very much. First, I would like to start off by congratulating the present government for keeping up with its mandate. I am happy to see that someone is finally revolutionizing the system. It takes leadership, intelligence and initiative to implement changes to services; an example is cuts. Those abovementioned attributes were obviously sadly lacking in the two previous governments in Ontario. It doesn't take much intelligence or any type of management skill to give money away which isn't available in the first place. It does, however, take sound management skills to clean up the bureaucratic mess created by the past two governments. It is my belief that Bill 104 is a cleaning agent for this mess.

When I think of the school boards, feudalism comes to mind. We presently live in a democratic society, so why is it that our school boards function within a feudalistic system, bureaucrats on top of the pyramid and students and teachers at the bottom? I don't think it is right to have money which is supposed to be going to the students trickling down the pyramid of administration before a small percentage of the money finally reaches the classroom.

Every year, teachers are faced with receding budgets, preventing them from getting supplies necessary to provide students with adequate education. As students, we are forced to use books which are old, making them outdated in relation to our courses.

To my understanding, school board administrators were hired to perform a part-time job. They have now taken that position and turned it into a part-time job with a full-time wage. I see something wrong with a system that cuts

spending and turns around and gives itself a 30% wage increase.

In the five years that I have attended high school, I have not once met or even heard of the trustee who is supposed to represent me. There are no letters sent to our homes showing some accountability to the parents and students for the money which the trustees spend on the golf courses and exotic trips. There is no explanation forthcoming when asked why school boards build architectural monstrosities.

It is this lack of accountability which makes me sympathize with residents who protest the 5% tax increase which is implemented every year. Residents who don't have children attending schools have a right to revolt against having to pay for other kids, especially if they don't know if the money is really going to the classroom and not the pockets of the bureaucrats; \$50,000 a year can buy a lot of books, supplies, computers etc, but that is precisely how much a school board administrator gets paid, if not more.

Basically, for a long time I have felt that school boards were unnecessary, especially when driving in Mississauga, up on Hurontario Street, one sees these huge buildings which are facing one another and one has a huge fountain. Upon entering the building, there is not a person in sight. It's like a dead building standing there. I don't know how it can be used differently, since that's the single use it seems to be built for, but I don't think it's necessary to have these two buildings which are empty — or it seems like they're empty — standing opposite each other in the first place.

I have spoken with many of my teachers, many of my fellow students, many administrators, many other residents and also with many seniors, who basically feel like I do, that they shouldn't be paying for our education. Personally, I think what the government is doing with Bill 104 is basically right, where it's trying to upgrade students' education, because we won't upgrade education

if we don't have money to buy textbooks.

In my OAC geography class, which is world issues, we presently use books which are basically five to 10 years and These taythock are totally out of date. World issues

old. These textbooks are totally out of date. World issues is a course where you have to keep up to date. We don't have the resources in our school for that type of course, so we are forced to use other resources like articles and listening to the news and so forth. Basically, that's what

I wanted to say.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): I enjoyed your presentation. I've been in Mississauga as well, and I've actually been in some of the classes. What I found amazing was that in some of the high schools they had a \$300 budget for books and there were virtually no books. Has that been a problem throughout your high school career?

Ms Ryzyj: Yes, it has been. I spoke with many teachers who basically — well, they don't complain. They speak to us and try to explain to us why we're using outdated textbooks. I know last year, when I was in grade 12, I took one course where my teacher said, "We have a dilemma." He's the head of the social sciences.

What he said basically was, "We either get books, which is a complete set for about 30 to 45 students, for this course or for another course." So basically every year they try to juggle between which course is more important. Is it the OAC, the grade 12, the grade 10, the grade 11? You don't know.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate the concerns about the adequacy of textbooks, because that's a concern we hear regularly from both students and teachers. Given that, I think you might be interested to know something which concerns us, and that's that the Ministry of Education wanted to set out where it thought it could get savings from Bill 104, from the amalgamation of school boards. They weren't able to find a huge amount of money, it's \$150 million out of a \$14-billion budget, but what concerns me is that even to find that \$150 million they had to identify savings of almost \$10 million out of classroom supplies and equipment. I would think that would concern you, given the fact that you feel that classroom supplies and textbooks are really not adequate

Ms Ryzyj: It is a concern to me. Reading all the backgrounders and all the information given on Bill 104, I believe that even if it is, let's say, \$20,000 given to each high school, or even to our high school, it's going to mean a great deal to us.

Mrs McLeod: Could you refer me to the backgrounder that suggested it would be \$20,000 that would come to

your high school?

Ms Ryzyj: I'm just giving out a number. It's not that I have it that it's going to be given to us. I'm throwing out the number.

Mrs McLeod: Is there something that's been given to you to suggest there'll be more money for schools under this?

Ms Ryzyj: Teachers?

Mrs McLeod: More money for schools.

Ms Ryzyj: Yes. That's why we're cutting down on school boards.

Mrs McLeod: I'd be really interested if you had copies of the backgrounders. That would be informative.

Mr Martin: I also want to thank you for coming today. You're obviously a very bright, articulate product of the system that is in place and I guess we can all be happy for that. You made a comment that there were people you spoke to who said they shouldn't be paying for education. I'm not sure if I heard you right. Would you mind explaining that and what they meant by that?

Ms Ryzyj: Basically, a lot of them were seniors. I am involved in a lot of extracurricular activities where I come in contact with seniors. Also, due to a family thing, I spent a lot of time at the hospital where I also had an opportunity to speak to some seniors. For one reason or another, hearing that I was a student we got talking on the topic of education. I really can't explain how we got on to the topic of how much taxes go towards education. They were just saying that they feel it's kind of unfair for them to pay the taxes since either their kids are already out of school or they've never had any kids.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Ryzyj. We appreciate your coming here. It's good to hear from

articulate young people.

## MADHAV UPADHYAY

The Chair: Madhav Upadhyay is next.

Mr Madhav Upadhyay: Right from the bottom of my heart, I am so delighted and elated to see all these people I have seen on TV. Now I can see you in person. I'm not saying it to please you; I'm expressing my real feelings.

My name is Madhav Upadhyay. I'm here as a parent. I have been in Toronto for the last 20 years, so you can see how long I've been seeing your faces, watching all

these great people.

The Chair: You have 10 minutes for your presentation, Mr Upadhyay.

**Mr Upadhyay:** Yes, I know. I am just getting there. If I don't finish in time, tell me.

What I am saying is that I am compelled to come here. I don't like politics, I don't want to be involved, but this is something, education, that is of concern. I am here as a parent, as a community worker and as an educator, which I have been for the last 20 years. I have two kids in the Toronto public school system; one is at the University of Waterloo and one is in grade 7. I live in the ward 11, ward 12 area where there are new arrivals. We have lots of South Asians, new immigrants. This is an area where you have the largest South Asian community and where different languages — Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi etc — are spoken. This is where you have the Tamil co-op building.

The reason I'm mentioning this is that this is a very special area with special educational needs. It's very easy for me to say, "I don't have money; I cannot help you," but if you are in that situation, you appreciate it more. As I said, I am a community worker. I have donated my time and I am still doing it. These are special educational needs: ESL, linguistic needs.

1740

People keep mentioning extracurricular activities. I don't call them extracurricular activities. For me, these are part of the curriculum. I don't call going to school just learning the books. That's only curriculum. Learning music, going to swimming classes: I call that curriculum. It's part of it because there is a whole learning, where children will be learning academic things in the school, but when they are participating in swimming and music, as both my children have — I'm really proud of them; otherwise they wouldn't do it — they learn leadership and there is so much sharing of things, sharing of ideas.

I'm not lecturing here. I want to emphasize this. I have been doing this for the last 20 years. In that area it is the eighth year that we do South Asian Heritage Day. I am proud to tell you that eight communities come together once a year and they participate, and it's only because the Toronto board system has a community relations or community services office or whatever. They give all the facilities. I've been told, "We're cutting and next year you won't have it." I feel this way: that we are muzzled. There's a phrase going around: "Sorry, we cannot do it; we have no money." I cannot stop eating if you have no money. Education is a basic right, not a privilege.

I want to say out of my heart, because I've experienced people who come and they cry, that people have social needs. In the schools what is happening now is we

are spending more time disciplining the kids because their families are broken. We are spending less time on academic things. I'm not exaggerating it. Since last year there have been some educational cuts and I can see there's a negative atmosphere in the school. The teachers are tense, which is being reflected on the kids. I have seen mothers come to one of my offices and they're literally crying, "How can we do it?" We say: "What can we do? There is no money." These are real-life situations. There's no politics involved here.

I must say this: Amalgamation is an excellent idea, but education is something that is special. There should be accountability, no question about it. I am for it. There should not be any misuse of the system, but I must emphasize that you just cannot ignore the needs of the community, and you cannot say that what you need in north Toronto, you have the same needs in south Toronto or west Toronto. I cannot emphasize it more, because I have been in it for the last 20 years. That's what I wanted

to say

What is going to happen is that amalgamation is going to mean losing local control. You cannot meddle with the culture, okay? People are so attached to the culture, and culture and education are related. I want to emphasize this. You can say: "We don't have money. We can't have cultural programs." Think of what I have seen happening because of the cultural programs. We come together, we learn about ourselves, we share our ideas. If we don't get together and we are worried about, "I don't have a job; I cannot go because I cannot live" — which is really brought into my heart because I happen to be working in a school which has integrated language classes.

People don't like to hear about international languages, "This is a waste of money," and everything else. But I'll tell you this is a testimony, this is the truth, no politics here: I have worked at Pauline Public School for five years and I have worked at Dovercourt Public School where you have integrated international languages. I have seen that whenever there is a cultural program with all the communities, the auditorium is full; there is no room

to fill when there is a regular thing.

I'm just telling you what I have seen, things happening. It's not something where I'm speaking with a board or something like this. The principals are elated. I said: "Can you see the difference? You may disagree on

something but see the proof right here."

Please, let us be realistic rather than saying, "We don't need languages." Languages are even more important now because of the Internet and everything. You know it is global. Actually, I cannot preach about languages; you

know very well.

Another thing is that I feel so proud to be in the public education system. I've been working there and I'm a role model. When I see a child and they see me, you have to see the face of a child, how that child is open and able to express. I don't know whether I'm just speaking for nothing, because what I have seen: "We have heard this before. It doesn't really matter. We know what we are doing. We are professionals." No, I don't claim myself to be a professional. I can only say I have experience in a certain area. Each of us is professional at something.

In this government, with due respect to everybody else, they claim: "We are professionals. Everything else was going wrong before. Now we have common sense." People don't have common sense? What is the matter with people who say "common sense"? People lose their common sense. They are so involved with their ego because they're in power. They think: "Whatever we are doing is right and everybody out there is dumb. They don't know. We are in power. We can do anything we want." If I say the same thing in school, the children are saying: "What are you doing? Are you upset?" "Yes," I said, "I'm upset because I cannot teach you what I want to teach you."

The children are upset. There are 30 or 35 kids. I cannot give special time to this little kid who just came from India or Pakistan or wherever, who is so smart but cannot speak or express himself and has been classified, "He should go to a special class because he doesn't know." That's wrong. Just the last word: I have helped 10 kids in my life in 10 years who were classified that they were dumb, that they didn't know. When I went there for interpretation, explanation, IPRC meeting, the whole thing had turned around, and after two years they

were gifted kids.

The Chair: Mr Upadhyay, thank you very much for coming. I regret having to stop you —

Mr Upadhyay: If I have gone overboard, pardon me, but I have to speak what parents want me to speak.

The Chair: I regret time goes so quickly. Thank you very much for being here.

# DAVID CAPLAN DARREL SKIDMORE

The Chair: David Caplan and Darrel Skidmore, please. Welcome, gentlemen. We're delighted to see you. As you probably know, you have 10 minutes for your presentation. We look forward to hearing your views.

Mr David Caplan: At the outset, on behalf of Mr Skidmore and myself, I'd like to express our appreciation for being allowed to make our presentation today.

We are here today on behalf of the 300,000 students in Metropolitan Toronto, their families and communities, and the public school boards that serve them.

Metro is unique. We appreciate that every community in the province is unique, but in terms of education Metropolitan Toronto simply cannot be treated as just another school district. The 300,000 pupils housed in 563 school facilities across the city make up a student base larger than six Canadian provinces as a whole.

We have a concentration of special needs, high-risk students and families that demand a range of services to a degree unlike anywhere else in the province. Thirty-three per cent of Metro students have been in Canada for less than four years. We provide 44% of all day school ESL programs across the province — 70 different languages and dialects. The low-income rate provincially is about 11%; in Metro it is this number and 50% more.

In large urban centres across North America there is poor student performance, yet here in Metro the contrary is true. Metro's schools perform very well. In 1995 the Ministry of Education conducted province-wide tests in

reading and writing of grade 9 students. Metro students outperformed the provincial average. New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami and Detroit all performed below their state norms. Clearly we're doing something right. 1750

The success of our schools has not gone unnoticed by the public. An Environics poll in November 1995 showed that 83% of respondents with children in the public education system in Metro were happy with their children's education. Given this success, it is not surprising that representatives from other major urban boards across North America are going to convene in Toronto next year to look at a large urban school system that is successful.

The public school boards in Metro have been leading advocates of innovation and change. We believe significant improvement is always possible, and I'd like to cite

two examples.

Metro's cooperative services represent a dramatic move forward in promoting efficiencies to services in support of education. The newly established purchasing and warehousing cooperative represents annual savings of \$12 million, through price advantages from greater purchasing power and reduced operating costs from combining several purchasing operations into one. Expanded cooperative efforts are certainly in the works.

The second example is that the Metro discussion paper on a proposed school services authority introduced an innovative approach to governance and administration which provided for local autonomy, greater equity, the cost-efficiencies of a large operation and the responsive service delivery of smaller accountable units. This paper was shared with and considered by the GTA Task Force, the Who Does What panel and the Ministry of Education. We urge the government to take another look at this model before plunging ahead with the dangerously inadequate Metro structure envisioned in Bill 104.

The critical yardstick for change must be whether it better meets the needs of children in our community. We believe in continuous improvement. We share the long-term goals of greater accountability and streamlining of the education system as a whole. Bill 104 will not meet

these objectives.

The new Toronto District School Board, as proposed in Bill 104, will have 300,000 students. The Sweeney report, a document which I might add this government is quite fond of quoting, concluded that school boards with enrolments between 5,000 and 55,000 would be considered optimal. The Sweeney panel noted there could be exceptions, but certainly contemplated nothing approaching 300,000 students. Ask yourself the question, is there a school board anywhere with 300,000 students that you wish to emulate?

The Minister has said the province is moving to centralized funding. Where is the responsiveness and where is the accountability in a system where the major budgetary decisions are made at Queen's Park, far removed from the schools? This proposal is particularly ominous for Metro, where aging schools have created extraordinary capital needs identified as \$1.3 billion. More important, what guarantees do citizens, parents and students of Metro have that their unique program needs will be met by a centralized funding model?

This bill puts democracy on hold. An appointed commission, above the law and out of reach of the public, will be in charge. It is strange and sad that a system focusing on the teaching of democracy, both in theory and by example, is being subjected to the undemocratic principles at the heart of Bill 104. What is the message we are sending to the young people of our province? "As ye sow so shall ye reap." That is not a future I think any of us want to contemplate.

The government's plan to take \$500 million away from Metro's public schools is unconscionable. Make no mistake about it, you are tearing out the social fabric of Metropolitan Toronto, and the long-term cost in economic

and human terms is incalculable.

In conclusion, let me pose some questions, and I might add that until these questions are answered, Bill 104 is simply unacceptable.

(1) Will you promise that no further cuts will be made to education until it is determined what programs are

essential?

(2) How will education dollars be monitored, and what is the reporting mechanism for public scrutiny?

(3) What is the definition of "classroom costs"?

(4) How will the funding model recognize the multitude of special needs of students, particularly in a community as profoundly diverse as Metropolitan Toronto?

(5) Can the government guarantee that students and parents will not suffer as a result of the changes being

proposed?

Does Bill 104 come with such a guarantee? No, it doesn't.

Our Metro school system has much to be proud of. It should have been built upon, not decimated.

Mrs McLeod: I think you've posed critical questions to which as yet we have no answers in terms of funding. I wonder if you would just take those 60 seconds now left to tell me where the \$500-million figure comes from.

The Chair: Excuse me, Mrs McLeod, that's 90

seconds in total.

Mrs McLeod: Oh, in total.

The Chair: You will have 30 seconds.

Mr Caplan: That figure is directly out of John Sweeney's report which shows that \$500 million will be extracted. If I might add, the proposals of Bill 104 go beyond that report. My fear is that the potential model could even go beyond the \$500-million figure.

Mr Martin: Thank you for coming today and making this presentation. At the beginning you said you're here today on behalf of 300,000 students, their families, communities and the public school workers who serve them. In what capacity do you speak on their behalf?

Mr Caplan: I am the current vice-chair of the Metropolitan Toronto School Board. Mr Skidmore, would you

introduce yourself, please.

**Mr Darrel Skidmore:** I am the director and secretary treasurer of the Metropolitan Toronto School Board.

**Mr Martin:** I just think it's important that anybody out there who doesn't know that knows who you are. I think that therefore gives some further credence to the excellent presentation you've made today.

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): It was a good presentation. I'm right next door to Toronto, on the other

side of Victoria Park Avenue, and that 20-foot band of asphalt really means the cost of \$1,000 extra per student. I think your cost is around \$8,000 and Scarborough's is around \$7,000. It's curious, because the types of people don't change at Victoria Park. They blend to be the same. So I don't know how you guys can spend so much money.

I know trustees like David Moll get \$49,000 for a part-time job, plus a third because he's chair, plus \$12,000 tax-free, plus a \$30,000 constituency allowance, plus meeting fees. It's all for a part-time job. That's not a bad

deal.

I draw comparisons between the cost per student. The separate board is \$5,400, the Christian board is around \$4,600, and I'm aware of an Armenian school in North York that's around \$4,000. When you're talking \$8,000 per kid — Scarborough refused to join your purchasing co-op because it was going to cost an arm and a leg and they had a better deal than you guys did. So all in all, I think you guys don't look after the numbers very well.

Mr Caplan: If I can respond, and there's quite a bit there, first of all the trustee remuneration which you referred to is not uniform across Metro and is not the real issue behind Bill 104. The real issue is what is the impact

upon students.

Mr Skidmore: I'm not going to speak to the trustee issue, but Mr Brown, I certainly am prepared to speak to

the other two issues briefly, if I might.

The first issue is in terms of the per pupil cost. We're in the process right now of providing analysis for the Ministry of Education on their invitation to provide input into the new allocation model. Quite clearly, we believe we can demonstrate that our per pupil costs are things that have declined dramatically in the last two to three years. Some of the figures that you're quoting are not

recent figures.

The second element related to that is the fact that the unique needs of Metro are such that we don't dispute the fact that other boards and other organizations have unique needs related to students. I have spent 20 years in a GTA board, five years in London and two years in Hamilton in various capacities from teacher through to director before coming to Metro. I can say to you unequivocally that the unique needs of Metro are something that does require additional costs. We're working very hard at getting those per pupil costs down. Sir, you're quite accurate in assessing that it is an area we have to address. But clearly, if you look at recent figures, that would be an element we have begun to take on in a very serious fashion.

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): On a point of order, Madam Chair: Mr Brown might want to know that he's talking to the Metropolitan Toronto School Board, of which Scarborough is a part; that this is not the Toronto Board of Education.

The Chair: That's not a point of order.

Mr Jim Brown: If you want to get into a debate that goes past the 90 seconds, I am quite prepared to do that.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Caplan and Mr Skidmore, for coming before us and presenting your brief. We appreciate your being here.

**Mr Caplan:** Madam Chairman and members of the committee, we appreciate your listening to our presentation and your questions a well.

Mr Skidmore: Madam Chairperson, you should anticipate as a committee that we will be submitting, as a council of directors, a letter indicating that the one request we have as directors is that the guarantees provided in Bill 103 for municipal employees be equally considered under Bill 104. Time doesn't permit today, but we'll provide that to you in writing shortly.

1800

## WILLIAM WALLACE

The Chair: Is William Wallace in the room? Mr Wallace, thank you very much for being here. Welcome. You have 10 minutes to make your presentation to the committee. If time allows, there will be some questions.

Mr William Wallace: Thank you. Shall I start?
Mrs Caplan: No, there's going to be a vote.

The Chair: I think there's going to be a five-minute bell for the vote.

Please, Mr Wallace, you may continue. It appears that the vote has taken place in our absence.

Mrs Caplan: Isn't there supposed to be a bell?

The Chair: There probably was outside. Mr Wallace. Mr Wallace: My name is William Wallace. I live in the east end of the city of Toronto. I have two children. My son is in grade 2 at Wilkinson Public School, and my daughter will be starting school in the year 2000.

I understand that I won a lottery in the clerk's office today and that's why I am able to address you. I am thankful for that opportunity, but it seems like such a sin that so few members of the public will get a chance to express their views on this foundation-shaking bill. I would ask that you find a way to extend the hearings. The current time-limited schedule is extremely worrisome.

I am deeply troubled by Bill 104. The provincial government has not provided a sufficient context for why this bill is necessary. There are so many unanswered questions that my first response to this bill was one of fear. I fear the loss of real local control of schools. I fear the loss of important programs in our schools such as French immersion, music, heritage languages, art, libraries, sports, guidance, counselling and special education. I fear the loss of staff who in many capacities support our children's learning. I fear a campaign of undermining and devaluing of teachers.

I fear that Bill 104 sets the stage for the privatization of our schools and the erosion of the achievement of our greatest public institutions. I fear the removal of \$1 billion from our schools and the impoverishment that will mean. I fear that children with special needs will not receive the help they deserve.

I fear the great downloading of financially volatile social services such as welfare, social housing and elderly

care on to municipalities that this bill aids.

I fear the decline in quality of one of the best public

education systems in the world. I fear fewer opportunities for my children to take pride and pleasure in their learning. My first response to Bill 104 is fear; my lasting response is deep, deep annoyance.

I'm usually a fairly optimistic person. I can deal with change. I can even deal with the unknown. But when people are making changes and not making clear why they are making them or what the process will be or what their ultimate plans are, I get annoyed. Privatization? Billion-dollar cuts? Dirty, dark, unheated schools? What's your plan? You will pardon me for being suspicious.

This is what I do know: The financial figures the Tory party has been using since before the election about how much waste there is in the system are not useful. When you say you won't cut classroom funding but do not include in that figure heat, light, support staff, principals, librarians, phys ed teachers, music teachers and many other essential parts of our schools, inferring that these elements amount to waste, you are creating the conditions for a bleak educational future.

But you do more. You break a trust with the public about the nature of our schools. It is the government's responsibility to accurately present the facts so that policy directions can be debated in a constructive manner. By twisting the message about the state of school finances, you undermine any future attempt to honestly reform the system, because so much energy is wasted on determining what is a lie and what is the truth.

I know this as well: As with Bill 103, Bill 104 represents an astonishing centralization of power in the hands of provincial and school board bureaucrats and their political masters. Most of these bureaucrats are probably good, hardworking and competent, but too much power

can do weird things to people.

Over the years, we have found a very effective means of counterbalancing the power of administrators: school trustees. Education has been so important to our communities that through trustees we have found a means of sharing the power and the responsibility. The relationship between administrators and trustees has developed into a partnership that works. The trustees are able to ensure that the administration remains responsive and accountable to the community. But to be effective, trustees need to have power, resources and the time to ensure the board stays on track, on the one hand, and that children and their families don't fall through the cracks on the other.

I for one am extremely impressed by the quality of representation I get from my local trustee. As a parent and a taxpayer participating in and contributing to our educational system, I would feel a great deal less confident about it if it were not for her full-time representa-

tion

When I read that Metro Toronto is going to be represented by 22 volunteer trustees for pocket money of \$5,000, I thought many things. I thought maybe the provincial government was in a folksy kind of mood and had in mind small towns where everyone knows each other and there are a couple of schools. It's kind of charming, and it probably works in small towns to have part-time trustees. But this is not going to work in Toronto. In my ward alone there are four public high schools, at least one school for new Canadians, a bunch of elementary schools and a population of students that is always changing rapidly. At Wilkinson, there is almost as much Gujarati and Chinese spoken at home as English. Who is going to fight for the resources to make this

highly diverse community's education work? Someone who is on the ball, knows how to make things happen and can keep on top of the issues to see results happen. There is only one answer: a full-time trustee.

What is this \$5,000 cap? Is it vindictive? Is it because in Ontario today only the rich can play? What's with the 22 number? It certainly is not going to lead to effective accountability. It is false populism to label politicians as the problem in our schools. They are an infinitesimal part of the budget. Leave the number of trustees alone. Leave their wages up to the local school board to decide.

Speaking of false populism, you are probably going to suggest to me in your questions that the parent councils will fill the role of trustees. This is patently absurd. First, the school is too small a unit to initiate and sustain effective change across the community. Second, these parent councils will have responsibility without authority. They will be without resources and they will not be able to spend the time on broad policy issues, children and parent support, troubleshooting and so on. Getting parents involved in schools is extremely important, but for goodness' sake set realistic goals for what they can contribute.

Finally, it is astonishing to me that the provincial government is set to launch this multibillion-dollar behemoth on to the populace, this Metro-wide school board. How do you define bloated? How is anybody going to effectively manage something so large? A dictator of a director of education? Certainly not 22 volunteer trustees. Responsive, accountable education demands school boards that are close to the communities they serve. In big cities like Toronto, it means full-time trustees.

You are taking a huge risk with my children's education without doing an adequate assessment of what the benefits are or how they are best achieved. It would be far more prudent to withdraw the legislation now and plan for an orderly reform by the time my daughter starts

school.

Mr Martin: Thank you very much. You certainly present this with some valuable perspective and view here this afternoon. I'm also a parent of four kids in the school system in the community where I live, and when I hear the view that somehow we're getting a mediocre product out of the system now and what that says in light of what I know is happening in my own kids' lives and the fact that I realize, as I'm sure you do, that there are always improvements that can be made and change happens, the massive change that is being proposed now in such a short period of time concerns me. How do we get across to the folks across the way that what they're doing will not enhance but will take away from what's already there?

Mr Wallace: I'm not entirely sure how to do that. I think they've heard views like mine. Gentlemen, you can probably let me know that. My sense is that the public school system is extremely effective in the city of Toronto. The reason costs are high is because they are extremely diverse populations. Some of the examples, sir, that you've quoted are very homogenous schools with very specific curriculum goals. In Toronto, those goals are extremely diverse and mixed, simply because of the nature of the population, who is in the schools. That's

why it costs more.

Mr Carroll: I have a quick question, Mr Wallace. Based on your presentation, I assume you would agree with me that outcomes of our education system, how well our students perform, is a measure of how effective it is. I'm sure you would agree with that. We don't do very well on the outcomes. On international tests, on national tests, we don't do as well as the country does as an average, we don't do as well as the world does on average. Our students do not perform very well. Against the province of Alberta, which spends almost US\$1,000 per student less than we do and scores dramatically higher in tests — do those outcomes not concern you, sir, what we're getting for the money we're spending as far as student achievement?

Mr Wallace: It depends on how you are measuring. Are they the same kinds of populations measured against the same kinds of populations? I don't think so. I think you're going to find a far more ethnically diverse and language-base-diverse community here. My understanding, according to education experts, is that it takes seven years for new Canadians to master English. I'm sure that's going to have an impact.

Mr Carroll: British Columbia comes in second —

The Chair: Mr Carroll, please let Mr Wallace finish. Mr Wallace: My understanding from a lot of the international tests is that you're comparing apples and oranges, the élite are being tested in one community. Those are things I've heard. You perhaps know better, but my sense is that the school my son goes to, and I hope my daughter goes to, is an extremely effective school. I am very happy with it. I think it's good value for money.

Mrs Caplan: We just heard from the Metropolitan Toronto School Board, not the Toronto school board, who said that in fact their outcomes are significantly above the average in the country and that is educational outcome. We have a situation here where we're listening to members from the government caucus bash and slam, particularly the city of Toronto. You've been sitting here and listening, and I thought maybe you'd like to take the last 60 seconds and just deliver your message clearly again about what is so special about the community you live in and what you need.

Mr Wallace: I'll give an example. On the first day of my son's senior kindergarten, there was a boy in my son's class who had just arrived in Canada. He spoke no English. He looked terrified coming into that classroom that day. This is an experience in Toronto every single September. There was an educational assistant in that classroom who could take him by the hand or take the class so the teacher could spend special time with that child and make him a part of that classroom and make him feel comfortable in his new class, in his new city, in his new community. If those kinds of resources are not in that classroom, that boy is going to be lost.

It is absolutely wonderful in my school watching children over the course of the year learn and become fluent in English, and they do that because there are people around to help them. Those are the kinds of grassroots, real examples we're talking about.

Education is hard work. It's people helping people. It's not going to happen by sticking kids in front of com-

puters and having massive classrooms of 40 or 50 kids. It's not going to work. What effective education is about is people, teachers and others, supporting children in learning. You know what? That costs money. I'm prepared to pay the price. I think many Ontarians, and certainly many Torontonians, are willing to do that as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr Wallace, for being here. On behalf of the committee, I thank you for taking the time.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are recessed until 6:30. The committee recessed from 1815 to 1835.

#### DIANE DYSON

The Acting Chair (Mr Richard Patten): Ladies and gentlemen, we will resume our hearings on Bill 104, and I will call Diane Dyson, if she would like to come forward, please.

Ms Diane Dyson: It's my honour to be here today. I am eager to have you all be a part of my daughter's political education. My daughter's understanding of politics for too long has been derived from watching demonstrations and picket signs, so it's a relief to finally show her that there is some debate and discussion that is also necessary within a democracy.

I was called today at lunch and told my name was chosen in a random lottery and that I was being given the chance to address these hearings tonight, so I changed out of my muck-about, motherly clothes, packed my daughter up in the minivan and raced down to tell you what my thoughts are.

But first let me tell you a little bit about myself. I am a single mother of two, a student in university, a home owner and a volunteer at my daughter's school on a regular basis, and also president of the parent-teacher association. Let me tell you what I have learned since I began this educational journey with her.

First off, when I entered into the classrooms and began to do work with the children, I was incredibly impressed with the challenges that teachers are facing these days and most especially how they are handling it. I help teach grade oners their colours and their alphabet, and this impressed me with the need for and the importance of junior kindergarten. I sat in special classes for students who couldn't learn in the classroom, and because of that I don't want to lose special education teachers.

I watched my daughter's classmates slowly emerge from their shell as they learned English, thrown into this new environment where they had to adapt or be lost, and because of this I don't want to lose the English-as-a-second-language teachers.

I watched the educational assistants in her classroom button up innumerable coats and wipe teary faces. Two of them live on my street. I think that's an important part for my daughter to learn, that the people who teach us are the people who are in our community. I don't want to lose our educational assistants.

Even before my daughter was in kindergarten, I met my school trustee over coffee at a neighbour's, and she remembered my name when I met her in the hallways a year later. I must tell you, though, I love my trustee. She answers her own phone, and I can phone her with information or for guidance at any time and know there's no voice mail for her. I don't want to lose her. I think what she is already doing is a full-time job. I don't want to be another number that she has to deal with. I like it that she knows my name.

I don't want to lose music teachers, gym teachers, principals, secretaries or vice-principals. I don't want to lose the custodian. He's an important part of the community. The children walk down the hallways and they

say, "Hi, Peter." They know who he is.

I don't even want to lose the downtown bureaucrats. The school boards have always been helpful when I phone, and I phone them with questions about school yard equipment and, "What are the standards of this?" I phone them with questions about drop-off parking zones and I phone them about equity issues. Then I phone Queen's Park, and I've been lost in limbo. I don't want to lose my school board, and I don't want to lose the closeness of that.

I also don't want to lose school community councils, but I don't want them to be running schools. There must be the steadying influence and the expertise that school

boards can offer.

The Common Sense Revolution said that classroom funding for education will be guaranteed, so, honourable members, I will hold you to that. The dangers I see are twofold. I'm worried about a change in representation, and this is coming in several disguises. There is the Education Improvement Commission, which worries me, and the fact that it has powers to overturn decisions made by parents earlier on or by trustees. I don't trust them with my daughter's education. It comes in the changes to parent councils, in that we may actually be given more powers than we have now and I don't trust ourselves to govern as widely and not to deteriorate sometimes into the squabbles that we do. And it comes in the changes with fewer trustees, as I've mentioned earlier.

The second danger that this bill puts forward is the change in financing. It would be a grave disservice not to recognize the differences that Toronto deals with, and I know you've heard about this in many of your other presentations, but let's not hurt the classroom, please.

By all of these fears I have been stirred to action. I've taken my children and braved snowstorms to go to local ward meetings to find out what are some of the issues that we have to deal with and we've come down to Queen's Park to hand over the petitions from our schools. I ask you to please consider carefully the rapid changes that are coming forth under this bill.

Mrs Johns: I'd like to thank you for coming today. I appreciate your time and I appreciate the attentiveness of your young one. I also have a five- and a seven-year-old in the school system, so I think we're all very concerned

about the future of education in the province.

I went to my board of trustees the other day and spoke to them, and one of the trustees there said that they welcomed the Education Improvement Commission because it allowed taxpayers to ensure, in times when boards were amalgamating, that the dollars and the taxpayers and the students were treated fairly and equitably in the school system. You obviously disagree with that. They felt strongly that there needed to be an

accountability there for the people of my region, because my board is merging with another board, if you will. Can you tell me why you don't agree with that?

Ms Dyson: I have some sympathy for the need to create more efficiencies. I am actually the daughter, I'll confess now, of a school board consultant, but in the province of Quebec, so I grew up knowing some of the tales of inefficiencies and I'm not saying there aren't improvements to be made. What scares me is the lack of consultation and the rapidity with which these things are happening. I won't make a bid to say there aren't improvements to be made. I'm just saying I'm scared that, the way we're going about it now, we'll be hurting what's going on in my daughter's classroom.

Mrs Johns: I guess I wasn't so much pinpointing on the issue. The concern is that, for example, when two boards come together they may have different assets or they may have different concerns. One might have debt and one might not, for example, so this commission allows there to be equitable treatment to ensure that money isn't thrown into something beforehand so that it isn't put into the merger. Do you see that as something

we should be concerned about?

Ms Dyson: There's a premise to that question, though, that the merging of the boards is necessarily good and therefore we need to find a reasonable way to make sure that happens well. I first would want to debate whether and how the mergers are happening, but the thing that also disturbs me about the Education Improvement Committee is the fact that their decisions are unappealable. That's something that appalled me when I first heard it. Within a democracy, it seems an odd thing to have included in a bill.

Mrs McLeod: I happen to share your concerns, not only about the way in which the amalgamation is being done, without answers to a lot of the questions you've raised, but also in the fact that all the evidence that has ever been brought forward about whether amalgamation

works suggests that it doesn't.

One of the studies that I would like to have tabled for the committee is one that was done by a consultant, Steve Lawton, who is often used by the minister and whom we've not always agreed with, but he did a paper on amalgamation and I think you'd be interested, given your presentation, that he says that large boards are more expensive, that amalgamation is expensive in terms of political representation as well as financial costs and that consolidation always increases the distance between citizens and their representatives. I think you've spoken very articulately to the sense of trust that you feel with not only your teacher but your trustee, although I don't know how many trustees would be able to call you by name after a year.

You're obviously a parent who's deeply involved with your children and with their schooling. Your kids would probably be okay if your parent council were running your kids' school. Why do you feel parent councils aren't the route to go then in terms of school management?

Ms Dyson: It's a terrible thing to say, but I'll go on record even to my own executive back home that I think too often we can get caught up in the politics of the moment and therefore run away with certain issues, and

that worries me. Also, I'm not sure we always have the expertise to understand the learning processes. We've seen enough fumbles with educators that we know it's not an easy thing to decide how you're going to teach whole language, phonics etc. The debates are extensive, so to turn it over to a group of amateurs — although we all love our children dearly, we don't necessarily know what's best to prescribe for them when they've got a cough; we do have to check with experts. I would worry that we would lose that expertise if we were to remove school boards.

The Acting Chair: Ms Dyson, time has run over. I want to thank you and your daughter very much for coming.

Mr Martin: Don't I get a chance to ask a question?

The Chair: It was my misunderstanding at the begin-

ning, but I'll give you first -

Mr Skarica: On a point of order, Mr Chairman: I ask for unanimous consent to extend this presentation by two minutes to give everybody equal time.

The Chair: Tony, if you want to do that?

Mr Martin: I appreciate that because I really did want to say to you very briefly that I appreciated the stories you told. That often says it better than anything else. I remember my eldest daughter's first day of school. I'll never forget it, the kindergarten teacher coming out and actually meeting us and being so excited about Moira arriving at school. Because of that, we felt good. We felt that she was going to be cared for the way we have cared for her.

The basis upon which all this change is being made is that somehow the system is producing a mediocre

product. Has that been your experience?

Ms Dyson: No, not at all. In fact, that's what's been so startling for me, to go into the classrooms and find out what good work is being done. That's all I can say.

One of the snowstorms that we braved our way through was just recently, and we obtained signatures from parents talking about their concerns. I'll just leave that in your log, or however you do that.

The Acting Chair: Can we see it? Very good. Ms Dyson: These are signatures of parents —

The Acting Chair: We will accept that on behalf of

Mr Skarica: Mr Chair, perhaps I could table at this time the reports that Ms McLeod was referring to that she has requested. I don't know if there are enough copies for

everyone.

The Acting Chair: I'll give them to the clerk and she

Mrs McLeod: May I also, Mr Chairman, express my appreciation for those two reports being tabled and also ask that the committee have tabled the paper by Stephen Lawton of OISE that was done on May 18, 1995, and revised June 7, 1995, on school board amalgamation.

The Acting Chair: All right, we'll record that.

## BARRY LIPTON

**The Acting Chair:** Will Mr Barry Lipton please come forward. Mr Lipton, I guess you know the procedure. You have 10 minutes.

**Mr Barry Lipton:** My name is Barry Lipton and I am a heavy-construction worker living in Toronto.

I am angry at the fact that this committee is excluding hundreds of citizens from presenting their views on this legislation to this committee. I was given 27 hours' notice to appear before you. This represents both an arrogant attitude towards people and the obscene haste with which this government is ramming these bills through.

I want to address this committee because I feel this bill will do irreparable harm to our children and, in turn, to Ontario. The true name of this bill should be the Less Democracy in Education Act. Its true purpose is to disembowel local control of the education system and to

steal \$1 billion from students and teachers.

It is An Act to worsen the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by reducing the number of democratically elected school trustees, establishing an Education Deterioration Commission to oversee the mutation of the new system, providing for certain matters related to citizen disfranchisement in 1997 and making other degenerations to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act.

The Harrisites in recent days have been trying to say that all the different parts of the mega-week announcements are separate and are not connected to one another. This is not true. There is a larger agenda at work here that has nothing to do with improving education or municipal services. It is an agenda that is driven by Tom Long and the right-wing Republican ideologues in positions of influence in the Harrisite government.

Today the Minister of Education said the building of new schools can go ahead without any problems. I suggest that he should read the legislation. Section 341(1) says, "From January 13, 1997 to December 31, 1997, an existing board shall not" — and I'll skip down to subsection (e) — "enter into a contract or incur a financial liability or obligation that extends beyond December 31, 1997."

The arrogance and anti-democratic nature of this government has been slapped down by the courts today. The illegal appointment of their trustees in Bill 103 is just a mirror of the appointment of the two co-chairs of the Education Deterioration Commission.

If the government thinks the citizens will not fight this legislation in the courts and win, you are sadly mistaken. Everything this government does is slipshod and arrogant. These two traits make it very easy for an educated and politicized citizenry to take on this government and win.

Several reasons that I oppose this bill are:

This bill establishes new district school boards and a transition process without any provision for a new role for the boards in relation to management of schools, financial decision-making and other issues.

The principle of representation by population on school boards, which is currently enshrined in the legislation, is

now relegated to regulation.

With no apparent rationale, spouses of school board employees are prohibited from running for office at any board, yet an employee of a supplier of services to a school is allowed to run — the trustee from McDonald's, the trustee from Laidlaw.

It would appear that the EIC is empowered to compel boards to contract out non-instructional services, destroying unionized jobs and putting many different people in contact with small children.

Also, buried among the EIC's responsibilities is the Harris government's hidden agenda, the establishment of charter schools, disguised as "increasing parental involvement in education governance"; two-tiered education, and two-tiered employment from a two-faced government.

Where there is not enough money for charter schools, there will be a decline in the quality of parental input. Parents will only be involved in the school council when their own children are in school. When their children graduate, so will the parents. The institutional memory will decline, and in the process much more energy will be spent trying to do things that were done before but forgotten. Not all children's needs will be met by parent councils. Children with disabilities and children from minority groups will not have their needs fully represented by parent councils. As a person without children, my concerns for the education system will be lost.

In closing, I want to address the opposition because I know they are hearing what is said. This government confuses the fact that it has a majority government with the reality of a polarized citizenry that increasingly does not recognize the Harrisites as a legitimate government.

The Harrisites have pandered to that segment of the population that hates politicians. You are democratic representatives and when this government portrays democratic representatives as self-serving politicians, they are attacking democracy itself. They refuse to realize that in order to govern you have to have the consent of the governed. We are entering into a polarized period in Ontario where more and more people are rejecting the legitimacy of this government. This is not only a problem for the Harrisites now, but it is a long-term problem for all government.

The destruction of belief in the premise of democratically elected governments representing and being responsive to citizenry leads to anarchy and civil decay. I am sure that when the citizenry starts to feel all the hospital closings, the decay of education that Bill 104 is bringing about, the privatization of sewer and water, and the destruction of Ontario's civil society, the anger will only rise. I am sure the government members will be told in their ridings that what they are doing is wrong. If they live in small communities in Ontario they will not be able to hide from the anger around them.

In Grey-Bruce, the district health board has been threatened with death. Why? This government insists on violent change in our society. Over 4,000 letters of protest were sent to the health board this past week. They need to call police to protect the board when they have a meeting. This is not in Toronto but in Owen Sound.

I hope the opposition parties start to speak out against the destruction of civil society by the Harrisites and to offer people an alternative to violent confrontation when they try to speak to their government.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate the fact that you've not only presented us with a brief but updated it with events that have happened as recently as this afternoon. Because of the decision by the courts on Bill 103 today, I'm

feeling particularly aware of the undemocratic nature of legislation which retroactively suspends rights of elected bodies, whether they are municipal councils or school boards. That is an issue we've raised today, that Bill 104, which has appointed co-chairs of the education and information — the EIC; I keep wanting to give it different names than the minister has given it — even though nominally they're consultants to the government. That they're already working and the powers of boards are already suspended, to me is the same kind of anti-democratic action as the courts found inappropriate and illegal in 103. So I'm hoping either the Speaker or the minister will recognize that fact.

I gather, just as a question, that you have not great confidence that the government is going to be able to address in its funding formula the needs of those children with disabilities or those with minority needs?

Mr Lipton: I think that the special programs that are available to children now will be part of the loss in our education system, that as money is taken out of the system those are the things that will be lost. I know people with children with disabilities here in Toronto who have good rapport with their schools.

Mr Martin: I take it that like the rest of us around the table, you have no difficulty with change and evolution and things being made better. From your presentation, my sense is also that it's the speed and the way this change is happening presently. You, as Ms McLeod suggested, referenced the court judgment today. We also had a judgment by our own Speaker in the House of the contempt of the Legislature that he found was present when certain decisions were made by the government.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre): That's wrong.
Mr Martin: They get very defensive when you actually —

Mr Flaherty: No, it's just wrong. That's wrong. It's not defensive.

Mr Martin: — poke them in that sore spot that is obviously bothering them.

**The Acting Chair:** Tony, you have to be quick. We're over time already.

**Mr Martin:** With respect to all of that, what process would you suggest we follow in this instance or in further instances as the government runs out its mandate?

Mr Lipton: I've put a lot of thought into the processes that are going on in this province and I think if this government wants to salvage something — and I'm really concerned about the kind of anger that's about in our province — if it really wants to involve people, it should take a close look at the process that was followed in South Africa with a constituent assembly in bringing together all the disparate parties in that country to form a constitution. That can apply to the education bill as well as the amalgamation bills. I think that is the only way to bring back this province from what I think is going to be a terrible future.

Mr Skarica: We've had some witnesses, such as yourself, saying that this bill will do irreparable harm; we've had other witnesses saying that we haven't gone far enough and there's a bloated bureaucracy that can't be dented. You say you're not opposed to change. How would you propose to improve the education system?

Mr Lipton: I started to say that I think it has to be done in consultation with those people who are involved. You have to really listen to them, not a two-week hearing process and then just go ahead and do what you want anyway. There has to be consensus among the parties. Unless that happens, I think you're going to run into major trouble in this province as a government.

The Acting Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Lipton. The time has gone over. We appreciate your presentation.

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#### CARLOS TORCHIA

The Acting Chair: I call Mr Carlos Torchia. Welcome. Mr Torchia.

Mr Carlos Torchia: I would like to introduce my daughter, Bianca. She attends Palmerston public school, in the French immersion track. My name is Carlos Torchia. I am a parent of two children at Palmerston public school, and I also represent the Spanish-speaking parents at the Toronto school board.

I have learned that under the new conditions set by Bill 104 the schools that the Toronto school board is presently composed of will see their annual budget reduced by between 25% and 40%. Thus, special programs and services tailored by the Toronto school board to serve the necessities of the multi-ethnic student population are threatened with disappearance. Programs such as reading clinics, buses for French immersion, lunch supervision, music, international languages, ESL, swimming lessons, adult education programs and services such as counselling, teacher-librarians and social workers will be drastically reduced or will be cut entirely.

Of course these losses will affect the student population as a whole, but on the other hand we know that the children of our community are frequent users of these programs. There is no mystery as to why this is the case. Many of the Spanish-speaking children are from families that have arrived in Canada during the last 20 years, escaping repression, civil wars and hunger in Central and South America. Many of them have difficulties in adjusting to the new life and to the new educational environment. Many of them show signs of post-traumatic stress disorder. Therefore, many of them require special treatment within the school structure, and, I insist, until now the Toronto school board has responded to these demands, providing an ample spectrum of programs and services.

Moreover, research released by the Toronto school board concludes that the so-called Latino children present low levels of academic achievement and high dropout risk even before completing their secondary education. Of course, these finding cannot be explained through the bell curve but rather because of the situations these children have been exposed to in their original countries.

As parents, we are vitally interested in assuring that the insertion of our children into this new society will occur in the least painful way possible. Until now we have had a great partner in this struggle: the Toronto school board.

When the Minister of Education announced that the school boards will no longer be entitled to collect the education portion of property taxes, anguish invaded us.

How will these special programs be financed? Can Mr Snobelen guarantee that the provincial government will pick up the slack? We are worried because Bill 104 states that the provincial government will centrally administrate the financial resources. We know that we are confronted with a government that is eager to cut public expenditures, a government that has a narrow concept of the classroom, reducing it to the ratio of 35 students to one teacher.

I am also concerned about the prospect of losing the provincial grant that finances international language programs. It has been well documented that students' self-esteem depends on preservation of their mother tongue and serves as a bridge in the acquisition of the English language. One of the greatest conquests of our community has been the teaching of Spanish in elementary schools either during the day or in an after 4 program. Many other students benefited from this educational option. Spanish is not only a heritage language but is also a strategic language in the global village for international trade relations. We demand that the minister commits to finance the international languages program.

A third aspect of Bill 104 that causes concern in the Spanish community is its authoritarian style. Without sufficiently consulting parents, the provincial government is trying to pass a bill that deeply restructures the relationship between parents and their boards of education, between parents and their democratically elected trustees. They help us make the school system work for our children and ourselves. If the number of trustees is greatly reduced, as Bill 104 proposes, the likelihood of being able to reach our trustees with problems and concerns will be minimal. Accountability for us, up until now, has been a daily exercise. If Bill 104 is approved, trustees will be distant representatives immersed in a gigantic territory and earning a ludicrous salary of \$5,000 a year. Who will lose? Parents and children.

Bill 104 requires that school councils will be established in all schools. I know little about this, because Bill 104 is not clear about how its members will be chosen or which tasks it will have to carry out. Will these school councils concentrate the delicate duties of trustees, dealing with the technicalities of the financial aspect of education? Are parents prepared to assume this task? If this is the case, will parents carry out this task on a voluntary basis? What kind of parents will have the time to participate in such school councils? Working parents? Single mothers? I doubt it. Rather, only an élite group of parents will be able to participate, in my opinion.

Another authoritarian feature around Bill 104 is that the provincial government will create a new organism to oversee education, the so-called Education Improvement Commission. Instead of perfecting the existing democratic process in education, the provincial government wants to break the relationship between common citizens and their elected representatives, putting above the elected school boards an autocratic body that distorts, undermines, controls and perverts the transparent essence of local democracy. This is a threat that will have consequences for democracy as a whole. What will happen if tomorrow some groups have the idea to establish a body to oversee and control the Parliament?

I am not afraid of changes. I am afraid of authoritarianism. In a democratic society, everybody can propose changes. Changes to the educational system are not evil in themselves; what is evil is the way these changes are being imposed by the provincial government, without establishing a deep and authentic process of consultation with parents and teachers, without first making the necessary impact analysis. When a major restructuring of social life is being proposed, nothing is wrong about it except that I want to have a say in it through a consultation process, which the government has the duty to lead and guarantee.

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I am afraid that the reduction of local democracy in education is a tool to cut the centralized budget further. I fear that parents distanced from trustees and boards will not be able to stop a big crisis in education, a crisis that unavoidably will lead to the privatization of the schools.

I have been living in this city for years, but originally I came from Chile. There, Pinochet's regime privatized a national school system that had produced a population of highly educated individuals and two Nobel Prizes in Literature. In Chile a system with municipal schools was established and subsidized by the government. There, poor municipalities could not supplement the government's subsidy, and rich municipalities with high-income taxpayers were able to substantially supplement the subsidy. Also, the reform allowed for the installation of private schools that received subsidy from the state. It was and is a good business in Chile to install a private school. All you need is a big house, desks and a few teachers, who previously were deprived by the dictatorship of a decent salary and unions.

Since democracy returned in Chile, and until now, it has been impossible to restore public dominion over education. In today's Chile if your want your children to go to university to study for a good career, you have to enroll them in an expensive private school. The highest marks in the national test at the end of secondary school, which determines entrance to university, do not come from the former democratic, equitable public schools; rather, students with higher marks now come from prestigious and expensive private schools. I do not want the schools in Ontario to suffer the same fate. For all

these reasons, I oppose Bill 104.

The Acting Chair: Mr Torchia, the time went over 10 minutes, so I want to thank you and your daughter, Bianca, for coming and expressing your views.

Tony, you'll lead off the next one. We ran out of time

on that one.

## DIANA WEATHERALL

The Acting Chair: Can I call forward Anna Ledo. Welcome. You probably noticed that you have 10 minutes. If there is time remaining at the completion of your presentation, we'll begin with Mr Martin. Thank you for coming.

Mrs Diana Weatherall: I'm afraid I'm not Anna, because today is the day that Alexander Muir/Gladstone Avenue Public School has its parents' meeting, and we didn't have enough notice to be able to change it. I am

Diana Weatherall. I have been asked to represent the parents' association of Alexander Muir/Gladstone Avenue Public School. We are here because of our deep fear about what we believe the legislation will do to our school.

Alexander Muir/Gladstone is located on Gladstone Avenue in the Dufferin and Dundas area of downtown Toronto. The school goes from junior kindergarten to grade 8. There are presently 451 students, 75% of whom do not speak English as their first language. As a 1B inner-city school, the poverty level is higher than at most schools in Ontario, yet Alexander Muir/Gladstone is a school that works. Visitors come from across North America and Europe to study its methodology. It was highlighted in last year's royal commission report For the Love of Learning, where it was included as a description of a successful school.

This was not always the case. The school that my Chinese children attended in the 1980s, this same school, was very different from the one my grandchildren are

now attending.

When nine years ago it became clear that Alexander Muir/Gladstone was not working, when the Portuguese community made the trustees and school officials aware of their concerns about their children ending up in non-academic schools, the board was able to respond. Alexander Muir/Gladstone become ESL, an English-as-asecond-language project. Research from the project has shown the achievements of the students and the fact that the students are now continuing to achieve secondary and post-secondary schooling.

Our fear is that with appointed officials who are far removed from local situations, situations which are not clearly understood, the kind of responses which resulted in our success will be almost impossible to achieve. This success has been achieved in part because we have put two important ideas about language learning in place: (1) that students need to be able to use the school to help them make a better transition to English; and (2) that while students with another first language may learn to speak English quickly, they need five to seven years of additional support to achieve the reading and writing

skills of a native speaker.

At Alexander Muir/Gladstone you will see ESL students speaking, reading or writing in Portuguese, Somali, Chinese or Vietnamese with a buddy. Adult ESL teachers, bilingual co-op students and international language teachers help the students in class, first to read and write in their language, and then when they understand the subject, translate the work into English for them. This is not help in the form of expensive technology but it is help that works. The proposed 25% cut in funding next year to the school board could mean the demise of the program.

The program is so much better than returning to what I went through when my five Chinese-speaking girls came in 1980. The eldest was placed in grade 8. I can remember blacking the bottom of a plate with a candle in the hope of explaining the word "combustion" to her and then puffing out the candle to illustrate respiration, of course to her total confusion. If the school had had someone who could explain Chinese so that she could

understand what the words meant, perhaps she would have been able to complete school, a fact that is causing her problems today.

One of the greatest concerns of the parent association is that these programs will be curtailed or cut. Their greatest wish is for their children to have an educational future that many of them did not have. They are depending on the school to give their children the skills that will enable them to graduate from high school, to enter college or university and then join the workforce at a level that will make them productive members of society and not a drain on society.

Alexander Muir/Gladstone parents have a very deep understanding of the importance of English as a second language. It would be disastrous to the community to have any cuts in these programs. This is the reason that we are so concerned about the transfer of all responsibility to the Ministry of Education, and the 25% cut in funding that the school board has told us to expect. Even if the cuts were 20%, we have looked and looked at the funds necessary to run the school and we see that we will be loosing teachers, as many as four, and at least two teaching assistants, to say nothing of clerical, maintenance cuts and then major cuts to our international language programs.

I would like to circulate to you a list of items that the school would have to do without or seriously diminish if the board has to implement the 25% cut in funding. The reading clinic would likely have to come to an end. This would probably mean a return to having ESL students streamed into the more expensive small special education classes, as they used to be.

For our pilot ESL project, the board provided a project teacher and one project officer. This has been phased out over a three-year period so that staff could plan and share the same philosophy in their classrooms. Due to a joint effort between the school and York University, all the teachers have become proficient in ESL. The staff are still innovative and few transfer out. At present, the staff are beginning to question why they are there, but the children still remain excited about learning. We do not know at what point the staff will become demoralised and lose their enthusiasm as the cuts loom and frighten everyone.

We do not see ESL students as having problems to be fixed. They have knowledge, skills and experiences, and with a supportive rich language environment, they do learn English and bring much to the English speakers who are their classmates. Any curtailment of our ability to help these children while they are young will cost society dearly. It is at the beginning of the learning curve that students can be helped, not at the end when they have given up and when the only course open to them is to let society or the government look after them, either on welfare or in jail.

The help that Alexander Muir/Gladstone has provided is not in the form of expensive technology. The Englishas-a-second-language innovations that have taken place in our school are innovations which the experts say will be needed in five years in a majority of Toronto schools that will have similar populations. That the school have the

wherewithal to continue this program is our major concern. Please do not feel that we don't value the many other programs such as performance arts, physical education, art, selected field trips, they are important, but we just feel that it's vitally important that our children are able to grow to their fullest potential, and we feel very strongly that the English-as-a-second-language program is the way for our children to achieve.

The Acting Chair: Mrs Weatherall, your time is up.

Thank you very much for coming.

## ELEANOR DUDAR

The Acting Chair: We call Eleanor Dudar. Welcome to the hearings.

Ms Eleanor Dudar: My name is Eleanor Dudar. I'm a parent of two children aged 18 and 15. My 18-year-old is at university; my 15-year-old attends Oakwood Collegiate in the city of Toronto. I have also, for the past three years, served as the Toronto board's environmental education officer. I have all sorts of other credentials, as your briefing notes on me may make clear, but these are the two pertinent ones in this context. Indeed, my remarks tonight come largely out of my experience as a parent active in my children's schools over the past 13 years.

The Toronto board is the envy of every parent activist I have ever met anywhere in this country, not because the board necessarily does parents' bidding — sometimes it does, sometimes it doesn't — but because the habit of parent involvement is deeply embedded in the culture of our board. "How will parents be represented on this committee?" is one of the first questions asked when any group is being formed to deal with matters of substance.

Do the members of this committee know that about the Toronto board? Do you know what that means to the way policy gets shaped and decisions get made at our board? Do you understand that meaningful parent involvement becomes possible only when you have a very active board of trustees, themselves fully accountable to the people? Parent involvement is part of a web of democratic relations in a school community that begins with having locally elected, locally accountable representatives. If you remove these salaried employees and replace them with volunteer trustees paid an honorarium of up to \$5,000, the trustees won't thrive and neither will parent involvement. There will be no legitimate basis for local democracy.

Toronto parents have a lot to lose with the passage of Bill 104. You are threatening to destroy a system that we as parents have helped to create over many years. And no, local parent councils are not the answer, nor can they take the place of trustees, but I have no time to develop that argument here. As an aside, what use do you think you would be if Ottawa were to declare that you should receive a stipend of \$5000 a year for your work as MPPs?

I have been told that the government members of this committee aren't really interested in what deputants have to say. I must proceed as if you are, and on that basis ask you to take a long second look at the bill. After all, you have to look at yourselves in the mirror every morning

just like the rest of us, however much you are being conditioned to shut out the voices of reason.

Apart from the really reprehensible robbing of the education system and our children's future to fund the 30% tax cut, the other big issue central to your government's concept of education reform is the destruction of local democracy. I want to talk about that, speak briefly about the role of policy, then close with a suggestion as to how you as government committee members might proceed.

Why the need for a long second look at this bill? I

shall limit myself to touching on two points.

My first point: Bill 104 deals a death blow to local

democracy in education governance.

First, it is bad enough that the trustees for the 300,000 students of the proposed mega-board would number 22 rather than the current 88 members of the six boards. Even if the 22 remaining were full-time, the system would be much less responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people it serves. This provision makes a mockery of effective representative government.

Second, and worse still, these remaining 22 people will not be full-time trustees. I would ask the committee, what work on my behalf are you telling them to give up now that they will be volunteer trustees needing to work 40 hours somewhere else before attending to board of education matters? This provision makes a mockery of

local political control of boards of education.

Third, and worst of all, are the sweeping powers the bill gives to the Education Improvement Commission, which is given what amounts to absolute powers over the governance of public education in Ontario until December 31, 2000. Nor is there any recourse should citizens of the province find the decisions of the commission and its committees arbitrary, unjust or just plain destructive. Its decisions, as you know, "are final and shall not be reviewed or questioned by a court." This provision makes a mockery of the rule of law.

Democratic practice is the anchor of citizenship in Canada. An active understanding of responsible citizenship is one of the main goals we hope our children will achieve by the time they leave high school. Democracy needs to be modelled throughout the education system.

One scenario haunts me above all as I contemplate the meaning of this bill. The scenario of what our schools with substantially reduced staffs will be like for our young people is a very worrying one, but this is not the scenario I speak of. Rather, it is a scenario of something that has already happened that I find so chilling.

From the first time I laid unbelieving eyes on Bills 103 and 104, I have been haunted by a picture of people in rooms, drafting bits of this legislation, passing them back and forth for vetting, making them proof against any appeal, and setting up the transition team and the Education Improvement Commission with their sweeping powers above the law. "Have you made sure there is no possibility of amending or softening or challenging our intent with these bills?" must have been the question asked over and over again until you had closed all the loopholes.

Hence, no judicial review, no protection of the Statutory Powers Procedure Act. If this legislation isn't going to destroy something very precious, why does the Education Improvement Commission need to be protected from proceedings for damages? The discussions, as legal advisers helped close all the avenues of decent redress we have come to take for granted, must have been very nasty, and very demeaning of you and of all of us.

Imagine a government so certain of the rightness of its position that it would dare to eliminate all possible checks and balances. While I am appalled at the planned grab of up to \$1 billion from the education system to fund the proposed 30% tax cut, my rage is saved for the utter contempt which this government has shown to the people of Ontario and to our democratic system.

My second point: Bill 104 makes no provision for policy integration. I can't help but wonder, when your government offers us in the proposed megacity 22 volunteer trustees paid an honorarium of up \$5,000 a year, what you know about the work of trustees. The more visible part, constituency work, can be guessed at, because it is something you yourselves, as elected members of the legislature, do. The less visible but equally valuable part is budget-setting and policy-making, and these activities don't happen in a vacuum.

Good policy depends on consultation among all the partners: teachers, parents, other board staff, community members and trustees. But the driving force in policy-making at our board is the trustees, through whom the public works to exercise its will and give direction to central administration. This is local democracy at work. Volunteer part-time trustees will not have the time or the knowledge to work in effective partnership with parents, teachers and senior administration in a board with such

heterogeneous need as ours.

Good policy is critical to building and maintaining a healthy education system. It articulates the vision and provides the framework of governance. It takes time and careful thinking, and includes, but is more than, just common sense. If I had more time, I would tell you how the Toronto board's environmental policy and its accompanying greening schools program was developed by a changing partnership of teachers, parents, board staff and trustees. It takes all those parties, and time, to make

effective policy that everyone can live by.

But nowhere does Bill 104 mention the policies of the many boards about to be merged. Imagine a bill on school board amalgamation saying nothing about the policy legislation that governs the practices of each board. I couldn't understand such a glaring omission until I realized that thoughtful policy-setting is anathema to a government that boasts that all you need to run the province of Ontario is common sense. You are following what you believe to be a recipe for success in the global economy, and you seem to believe you can proceed on automatic pilot. I suppose you don't really need policies of substance when you've got "truth" on your side. None the less, it's my hope that the hearings on Bills 103 and 104 have helped you to see that you don't have the whole truth and realize that you must pay attention to the real needs and interests of real people and of a system that isn't broken.

Finally, how to proceed with this bill? First, you need to summon up a couple of simple but quite rare qualities,

qualities that none the less we all have: courage and humility — courage to admit the very deep flaws in the bill as proposed and humility to learn from the many submissions you have heard about ways to go about education reform that make sense.

The greatest act of courage and humility would be to recommend that the bill be withdrawn for further study. If you can't manage that, then a fallback position would be a thorough revision of the bill that removes the most glaringly, insultingly undemocratic features: restore judicial review; ensure that the body overseeing the transition is drawn from locally elected boards and not one appointed by the minister; and restore the possibility of a living wage for the full-time job that being a trustee needs to be, certainly in Toronto, the board I know best. Review very carefully the drastic cut in the number of trustees.

What this bill doesn't represent is common sense. Common sense, after all, doesn't actually preclude careful, deliberative thinking. Rather, Bill 104, like Bill 103, represents common contempt: contempt for democracy, contempt for people's needs, contempt for real common sense.

As I sit here tonight, I can't rid myself of the vision of people drafting this bill, and perhaps even gloating over how people-proof you have made it. Luckily, you still have time to make changes. If you don't, your contemptuous approach to politics and to the people you were elected to serve will come back to haunt you.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, Ms Dudar.

## ALANNA McDONAGH

The Acting Chair: I now call upon Alanna McDonagh.

Ms Alanna McDonagh: I am grateful to have this opportunity to speak with you today, particularly as I am aware that many hundreds of other parents, every bit as frightened and angry about what the government proposes to do to our schools as I am, have been denied this opportunity.

This button I'm wearing today says, "Don't cut the heart out of education." Now that's a pretty violent image, to cut the heart out of something, but I don't think it overstates the reality of what's going on here. With Bill 104, the current Minister of Education has launched a devastating attack on our public education system and, as a result, on the quality of our children's lives.

Since children spend nearly half of their waking hours at school, what is under attack here is not only their education, but also the very quality of their formative years, of their childhood. It should come as no surprise then that the majority of us who have appeared before this committee are mothers of children in the public education system. It should come as no surprise because, to paraphrase the old saying, "Hell hath no fury like a mother whose children are under attack."

Very early on in Mr Snobelen's tenure as Minister of Education, he was captured on videotape advocating inventing a crisis in Ontario's education system; an unusual aim for a Minister of Education, but then this was no ordinary Minister of Education. Mr Snobelen has delivered on that promise and our schools must now

struggle to teach our children under a cloud of menace and confusion. With the introduction of Bill 104, Mr Snobelen takes his create-a-crisis plan one giant step further.

I would like you to ask yourself, what, or should I say whose, purpose does it serve to create a state of crisis in our children's schools? It certainly doesn't serve the children; on the contrary, it does them a very great disservice. It doesn't serve the teachers. It doesn't serve the parents. It doesn't serve the electorate. Who stands to gain from Mr Snobelen's invent-a-crisis plan? Who stands to gain if he is successful in destroying public education in Ontario?

Let me share with you something I've recently learned about Ernst and Young, the private sector consultants whose report, Analysis of School Board Spending, Mr Snobelen uses to justify much of what's in Bill 104. Ernst and Young has produced a manual outlining its ambitious plans for world-wide privatization of publicly run institutions, a manual which includes the following statement: "State-owned enterprises have consistently proven to be among the most sought-after buys of the past decade."

Is this the fate that awaits our children's schools? Are they to be seen as sought-after buys, sources of profit for businessmen, rather than as institutions of learning, as educational environments designed to foster the healthy development of our children's minds and spirits? Will our children's schools be put up for sale to the highest bidder? There will certainly be no way to stop this from happening if Bill 104 passes into law, because whatever the Education Improvement Commission wants, the Education Improvement Commission gets, and no one, not even a court of law, has a thing to say about it. This is democracy?

To further support my perception that this government would dearly love to privatize education in Ontario, let me share with you a conversation I had a few months ago with Mr Terence Young, parliamentary assistant to John Snobelen. It took place at Howard school in the west end of Toronto. I, along with other members of the ward 2 parents' council, had organized a meeting to help parents understand and respond to the ministry's high school reform proposals. Although he was specifically asked not to, Mr Young co-opted half an hour of our two-hour meeting to sell the Crombie commission's proposals on changes to education funding.

Our meeting, as seems increasingly commonplace whenever members of this government are brought face to face with the public, degenerated into fury, confusion and frustration. After it was over, I confronted Mr Young. I asked him if his government was or was not going to take \$1 billion out of the education system, as Mr Snobelen had been hinting in the press at the time. "You'll see," was the only response I could get out of him.

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Finally, at a loss as to what else to say to Mr Young, I said simply, "I think your government is evil." He looked taken aback for a moment. Then it was his turn to surprise me when he replied, "Well, I think Communism is evil." I was, as you may imagine, bewildered, finding this to be a complete non sequitur. I asked Mr Young to

explain himself, but once again he flatly refused to answer my question. Later on, however, the penny dropped. What Terence Young, parliamentary assistant to John Snobelen, Minister of Education, meant, I now believe, was that public institutions such as public education, are communistic, and therefore "evil." In an instant, Mr Young revealed his true colours and the underlying agenda of his government.

The government introduces this Bill as An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system. First of all, there is nothing in Bill 104 which improves the accountability of our school system. In fact, the precise opposite is true. By reducing the number of democratically elected representatives, by reducing the number of community school boards, by mandating that voluntary parent councils which are accountable to no one be given greater decision-making powers and responsibilities, by making it possible to outsource support staff positions, and most of all, by appointing and granting extraordinary powers to the fallaciously named Education Improvement Commission, the current Minister of Education has with Bill 104 all but wiped out the accountability in the system, at least as far as accountability to the electorate is concerned. The Education Improvement Commission, an appointed body which has been given absolute power over everyone else in the system, is accountable only to the Minister of Education.

There appears to be nothing in Bill 104 which even addresses the quality of Ontario's school system. Nevertheless, it will inevitably have a negative impact on the quality of education in this province because it removes effective control of education from educators and puts it in the hands of a Minister of Education who isn't even educated, let alone an educator. I can tell you I do not sleep better at night knowing that a man schooled in horses and garbage may be making critical decisions about my daughter's education.

I know you will say that school boards will still be mandated to make the educational decisions, but having been stripped of the power and resources to implement any initiatives other than those rubber-stamped by the Education Improvement Commission, how much weight will their decisions carry? The minister is fond of blaming school boards now when they're forced to eliminate programs or increase class sizes to cope with his funding cuts. It's very convenient for him to have them to blame, and guess what? He'll still have them to blame, but now with even less capacity to fend off his attacks on public education.

I object as well to the fact that with this bill local communities lose control over both the funding and the governance of education. What do we get from the party which promised us smaller government? School boards the size of France, school boards with populations greater than all of the maritime provinces combined. Is this what Mike Harris meant by smaller government? Huge governments at great distances from the communities they serve, extreme centralization of power — this sounds more and more like a totalitarian state and less and less like Canada.

Children belong to the community in which they live and that community is in the best position to know what its children need. Distant provincial bureaucrats and overworked, underpaid trustees with responsibility for hundreds of thousands of children scattered over vast geographical areas cannot possibly be in touch with the real and specific needs of our children, and so these real and specific needs are likely to go unmet.

The mandating of parent councils is a very peculiar and utterly unworkable idea. How do you mandate volunteers? Is that like workfare for parents? This idea is also a virtual recipe for the takeover of special interest groups at the local school level, special interest groups, I remind you, that are accountable to no one. Equity will become but a fond memory as affluent parents can afford to give time and money which less affluent parents cannot. I don't know a single parent who likes this part of the bill. We don't want more responsibility than we already have, we don't want to work for nothing and we as parents do not have the expertise or the experience to perform important functions which require both.

I want to say a word or two about the minister's plans to facilitate the outsourcing of our support staff positions. The support staff in our schools spend many hours every day in pretty close quarters with our children. We want to know who they are. We don't want them to be changing every few months, so that children become accustomed to seeing strangers in their schools and can no longer easily know who should and who should not be walking the halls. The provision for privatizing our support staff will increase staff turnover and decrease their accountability to the school community. Their employers will be private sector companies whose bottom line is profit, not the wellbeing of children. This will, I believe, inevitably lead to situations which compromise the safety of our children. Surely nothing which does this can be allowed. Why on earth is it even being considered?

There are other aspects of Bill 104 which I don't like, but my time must be running out. I only hope that time is not running out for the excellent public education system we have now in Ontario, a system which Mr Harris was happy enough to brag about to foreign investors last year but which his own education minister seems nevertheless determined to mutilate with drastic reforms. Will somebody please tell Mr Snobelen it makes no sense to perform radical surgery on a healthy patient, so please, put away the knife.

Thank you for listening, and please, for the sake of all our children, yours as well as mine, throw Bill 104 on the scrap heap, where it belongs. Don't cut the heart out of education.

The Acting Chair: Ms McDonagh, thank you very much for coming.

### PAUL GOULET

**The Acting Chair:** I'd like to call Paul Goulet, please. Mr Goulet, you know you have 10 minutes?

Mr Paul Goulet: Yes, sir, I realize that.

The Acting Chair: If there's any time left, we share the time between the three parties to pose questions to you. Mr Goulet: I'll do my best, sir.

The Acting Chair: By the way, if you do run close to the 10-minute mark, I'll give you a minute's notice.

Mr Goulet: My name is Paul Goulet, and I am a Canadian citizen who is a long-time resident of the city of Toronto, for the last decade as a homeowner in the Annex neighbourhood. My wife and I are blessed with three daughters, one of whom has attended Toronto schools and then graduated from Ryerson, and two younger daughters currently doing well just a few blocks from here at Huron Street Public School. Until recently, I served as co-chair of the Huron school PGA and I have the continued honour to serve as chair of the Mid-Town Parents Council, the consultative association of parent organizations at Toronto Board of Education schools in wards 13 and 14.

Accompanying me this evening are some of my Mid-Town Council colleagues: Marcia Nemoy, whose two children attend Hillcrest Public School in ward 13 and whose balanced thoughts about educational issues were recently featured in Maclean's magazine, and Beverley Manchee, a concerned parent whose two children attend Cottingham Public School in ward 14. Both my colleagues also serve as Mid-Town delegates to the parent involvement committee of the Toronto Board of Education.

Although your committee's hearings this week are dedicated to representations from individuals, I want to stress that my remarks reflect the collective views of the three of us. We cannot pretend that our comments will satisfy every opinion held within our dual ward school community. As you might expect, there is much diversity between and within our school parent bodies, our school communities and our overall spectrum of neighbourhoods. But the views of the parents taking part in the Mid-Town Council fall into two main categories: some who vehemently oppose this legislation in its entirety and those who have resigned themselves to the fact that the provincial government is preparing to push it through, despite significant flaws. We come before you as parents with the latter view.

We have said to ourselves, "All right, if the new legislation is going to be passed by a government that has the votes, then how do we want to influence the shape and details of that legislation?" Our touchstones have been the need for more clarity, more accountability and more timeliness. Here's our essential shopping list:

(1) We are deeply worried about class size ranges. So many of today's pedagogical practices are highly dependent on the current ranges, so if class sizes escalate significantly, we'll be facing costly and disruptive changes in curriculum and teaching practices. Common sense dictates that smaller groups give greater opportunity to focus on individual needs. The minister has committed that he will not touch the classroom, so the legislation should guarantee that statement by entrenching class size limits from JK through high school.

(2) We are insistent that certain items deemed as outof-classroom extras, such as physical education, be guaranteed as core curriculum at the primary level and be widely offered as elective programs at the high school level. Today's children are 50% less active than our generation. What impact will this have on our health care system in the future? We must show our students how to respect and fulfil their bodies as well as their minds.

Language programs: In this age of global markets and trade, can we question the value of foreign languages and culture? Visual performing arts and music: Stimulation and disciplined training of the creative powers is part of being a more fulfilled and balanced human being, and such training can also enhance creativity and sensitivity in science, technology and business. Learning to learn should be a beautiful experience. Math, science and technology programs with adequate computer resources: The minister's passion for "a computer on every desk" is meaningless unless we have the trained teachers who are up to date in changing technology and clear links between computer technology and the curriculum at every level. Are we ready?

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(3) The government has spoken, but vaguely, about extra funds to underwrite a range of extra needs, including the undeniable special needs of a diverse and complex school community such as Toronto. Delivery of extra support is done by our educational and administrative assistants, who can often bridge the gap between our students' needs and constrained resources, and by vital psychological and social services to support student learning. These programs and personnel are essential, they are not extras. The federal government budget promised increased educational funding and our provincial government is now indicating the same. Tell us what methods will be used to analyse and allocate priorities to the extra needs of the greater Toronto community, including guarantees for the necessary funding.

(4) The implications of Bill 104 and the rescheduled implementation of the ministry's PPM 122 will necessarily call for an increased level of direct and substantial participation by school community councils and particularly parents, who are already hard-pressed for time and resources, in advising on matters of governance, communications and curriculum implementation at their schools. Parents need greater clarity about their expected roles and duties. What training and resources will be provided to these councils and the parent participants so that their mandated duties can be fulfilled credibly and

consistently?

(5) Will the new public school boards be able to deal effectively with the "urgent priorities for the future" that our government emphasizes, such as information retrieval and information management, when we are massively underfunding our school libraries and, perhaps worse, decimating our population of teacher-librarians and library technologists, thereby ensuring that our children are ill-trained to use information resources?

(6) Will we view teacher training and retraining in the same old ways or will we apply new modalities of professional evaluation, including advancement and recognition by merit as opposed to seniority? Will there be fewer impediments to cross-board recruitment and hiring? How will we encourage quality instruction personnel in all Ontario communities?

(7) We seek clarification about how the modified school board system can secure the services of the best-

qualified trustees. Must you be independently wealthy in order to serve? If not, what realistic enhancements will be available to encourage trustee candidates of quality? As a supplement to the trustee function, what about the number and mandate of school superintendents? Can we get commitments that parents will enjoy adequate access to a sufficient number of empowered bureaucrats who have a direct and responsive role in their children's educational wellbeing?

(8) We urge that a common code of accounts be adopted across the province so that all school board financial accountability and performance analysis can be better conducted from a reasonably comparative platform. Will we be able to conduct adequate comparisons of resources and performance between the public and separate school systems?

(9) We need a renewed and appropriately detailed statement of objectives and mandate for the ministry and for its subsidiary mechanisms, including the EIC and the revised school board system, which would include a statutory declaration concerning an unequivocal commitment to quality education for all children in Ontario.

(10) The main task of implementing Bill 104 has been allocated to the proposed Education Improvement Commission. We require much greater transparency about the commission's structure and operation. We find it totally unacceptable that the commission's activities cannot be questioned in the courts. We citizens can seek legal recourse against our government, so why not the government's creature?

In conclusion, we want clarity, we want accountability, and to achieve these objectives as expressed with adequate detail, we want timeliness. Slow down the process, to get it right. Of most importance, enshrine the clarifications and commitments within the legislation so that the citizens of this province will become more confident that its government is truly committed to all our children.

To quote the acclaimed education author Neil Postman: "School will endure since no one has invented a better way to introduce the young to the world of learning; the public school will endure since no one has invented a better way to create a public; and childhood will survive because without it we must lose our sense of what it means to be an adult."

The Acting Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Goulet.

#### SHEILA CARY-MEAGHER

The Acting Chair: I'd like to call Sheila Cary-Meagher, please. Welcome to the hearings.

Ms Sheila Cary-Meagher: Good evening. For those of you who like context and don't have blue sheets, I'd like to introduce myself. My name is Sheila Cary-Meagher. I am the mother of five, stepmother of three and grandmother of six. I have been involved in education all my adult life over three continents and five countries. I have lived half my life as a Canadian citizen and the other half as an American. Thirty years ago I chose Canada, I chose Ontario, I chose Toronto for its unpretentious, good quality of life. A great part of that decision was based on an education system that outstripped all I had seen.

If this school system has a product — and I think that analogy is an appalling and disrespectful way to speak of children — it is the people who are this country's future.

In the recent past, it was the Canadian public school system that produced the bulk of our leaders, not an élite group of private schools, not a select moneyed class, not a family compact. Our present system works extremely hard to provide well for an incredible diversity of race, language, nationality, religion and class. As a parent, a trustee and a taxpayer, I have seen it up close and personal.

When I was nine, I was in a split grade 4-5 of 52 children and a teacher who was emotionally breaking down because it was all simply too much for her. It was a hellish experience. My hands can still feel the pain of the wooden ruler with the metal edge that was administered because I could not read or spell properly. There was neither time nor money nor experience nor people enough to deal with slow children. Instead, I was left to finish my education believing that I was just dumb. At 41 I was diagnosed a dyslexic. Imagine what it is like for a child to grow up believing that she is stupid when she was only disabled. Imagine the waste. Imagine the anger.

Bill 104 promises to deliver that experience to many children with its stripped down version of education, with its return to the 1940s, with the de-skilling of the people who are to care for our children, our future and, indeed, for my grandchildren. Bill 104 is a kind of hands-off

child abuse, but abuse none the less.

What is extraneous to the classroom? Libraries? Testing for disabilities, dysfunction, disease? Cleanliness and safety in the classroom, the gym, the school yard? Administrators, secretaries and aides who make un-

disrupted and pleasant a child's day?

In a rich, sophisticated society like ours, why is it necessary to give our children a barebones version of learning? Could it be the Chicago experience, indeed the American experience, of making the public system so uncongenial that those who can afford to will send their children out of it and into a new system of for-profit schools? Can it be that anyone is still fooled by the idea that Canada can't afford good, free, public education? Can it be that the Americans have so hoodwinked or bullied those in power to follow their example? My God, can we afford to become America revisited? Why the hell would we want to?

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I asked myself over and over during the Mulroney decade why that government couldn't see what it was doing. I asked the same question at the beginning of the Harris years, and then, sadly, I realized that you did understand, you do understand the havoc you are wreaking, you do mean to do it. You mean to create an uneducated underclass, you mean to create a pool of cheap labour. You probably don't mean to create misery, but if it falls out from what you do mean to do, it isn't your

In addition to what you are planning to the process of educating children, I now understand that you wish to further pillage our system by selling off our school buildings and school lands and then leasing them back through your EIC when they deem it necessary. Since I

believe that you fully know what you are doing, there is no use in quoting statistics on how and where that process has failed in both the US and England. But in the short term you will steal from Metro Toronto alone better than \$5 billion dollars.

I like to dream of a Dante-like circle in hell for those in power who turn their backs on children, those who waste their possibilities and who doom them to failure, who sell their birthright for a mess of pottage. I picture that circle and it gives very little comfort while I wait and organize for payoff time. Perhaps we should start with a tax revolt and then — well, I'm not sure, but hell hath no fury like a grandmother whose children and grandchildren are under threat.

Applause.

The Acting Chair: It's not usual that we have applause in the committee rooms.

Ms Cary-Meagher: I didn't arrange it.

The Acting Chair: I permit it because I think there's an expression of empathy, which I acknowledge, but I would ask you to limit it.

You have three minutes, one minute each party. Mr

Martin, would you like to begin?

Mr Martin: You certainly made some very poignant and —

Ms Cary-Meagher: I'm sorry, I'm old and I can't hear very well.

Mr Martin: Sorry. You certainly made some very important and poignant points here tonight. Your reference to America revisited reminds me of last week, when I was in the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and an economist came in talking about how wonderfully Ontario was doing in the eyes of the international monetary gurus, and there was some comment there about Mike Harris being more like an American than a Canadian. Perhaps that's true.

The premise upon which the change is being made is that we're producing an inferior product, that we're producing a mediocre product. Would you like to com-

ment on that?

Ms Cary-Meagher: It's not true. It's not true in a thousand different ways. I have been a teacher. Both my husbands were university professors. I have children who teach in university. Our experience generally has been that if you want good education come to the city of Toronto, or at least come to Ontario. I go back to the States on a regular basis and visit friends and family there. As just a kind of tiny mark, the condition of the schools and the school yards there is appalling. I come back here and I look around and I think, "At least the school across from my house looks like a place where children could be comfortable and happy. It looks like it's used and not locked and just a dirt patch."

The children that come from the Toronto system, which is the one I know the best, can, for the most part, go any place they want to university, should they be able

to afford it nowadays.

The Acting Chair: We have one minute for each member, so I'm sorry, I'm going to have to —

Ms Cary-Meagher: I'm sorry.

Mr Skarica: I believe you referred to the Chicago system. I don't know if you're familiar with the book by Martha Collins, who is a teacher in Chicago. Are you?

Ms Cary-Meagher: I'm sorry?

Mr Skarica: Martha Collins wrote a book. She was a teacher in Chicago.

Ms Cary-Meagher: No, I'm not referring to that.

Mr Skarica: She set up her own school at a fraction of the cost of the public system there, which was producing students with very poor results. What she did was, she introduced rigour into the curriculum and she had high standards that she expected of the children. The teachers were told to basically teach and not have any other functions, not fill out millions of forms and those types of things. What happened there was the students did very well in the inner school but at a fraction of the cost of the inner city. Perhaps you could comment. We've heard already that even in Metro Toronto you have a wide variation of money spent, from Scarborough at \$7,000 to Toronto at \$8,000. So it's not money per se. Money is part of it, but there are other things that determine the quality of education.

Ms Cary-Meagher: I have never noticed that people care that the money they spend on education is high or low as long as it produces good results for their children. I have been struck recently by the insurance system — I'm drawing an analogy — which now tries to divide the people who don't have accidents from the people who do have accidents. The people who don't have accidents get lower rates and the people who do have accidents get ligher rates. I'm sorry, but I had thought the idea was to spread it over the entire population, and the same is true

of education.

If you give me a bunch of really smart kids with no problems, for very little money I can teach them just about anything, but if they've got family problems or if they've got physical problems or any kind of problem, it's going to cost me money. That's the thing that's so frightening about what this bill is all about. It drives the people who can afford it out of the public system and leaves behind the poor, who can't afford to leave. This is the Chicago experience: black, downtown, poor — public education; rich, middle class, white — uptown education.

Mr Skarica: Perhaps you should read the Martha Collins book. She dealt with the black, the disadvantaged children, the very poorest of the poor that the public system was not dealing with, and those are the kids she

in fact took.

Mrs McLeod: I want to use my moment just to thank you for your presentation, because I think it's a significant one among some very fine presentations that have been made tonight. If the conditions that Mr Goulet set out in the last presentation could be met with a guarantee, all of us would relax somewhat, although I personally would still be very concerned about the loss of local governance, which I think is implicit in this bill.

I don't think we're going to get those guarantees. We can't even get answers to the questions about how students' needs are going to be met with adequate financial resources. I think all we can do is share your fears and try and make people understand what we see as

being the consequences of this bill.

My grandson was born the day that Bill 26 was passed last winter, and I really believe that was a sad day because it was the beginning of seeing some of the most basic values that we believe in eroded. I think that's what we're still seeing today in Bill 104. I don't know if the government understands why some of us feel as emotional about this bill as we do. It looks like such a simple thing. I think what you've done tonight is bring a real sense of the emotion and the passion that underlie people's fears of this bill, so thank you.

The Acting Chair: Ms Cary-Meagher, thank you

kindly for coming this evening.

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## JOANNE NAIMAN

The Acting Chair: I now call forward Joanne Naiman. Ms Joanne Naiman: I've got an extra friend. I was only going to bring my son, but I've now got his friend as well.

The Acting Chair: Welcome to you and to your consultants.

Ms Naiman: This thing was originally addressed to Daniel, so Gavin can listen and I may refer to him at some point.

I'm Joanne Naiman. I guess you know from your crib sheets I'm a professor of sociology at Ryerson Polytechnic University and a parent in the Toronto school board.

I am appearing tonight with my son Daniel, who's a grade 5 student at Hillcrest Community School, and his friend Gavin Nolan is joining us as well. I have brought him here tonight because I think there are some important things that he needs to learn. We parents who oppose the current cuts to education are commonly charged with being opposed to change. Quite the contrary. There are many changes I would like to see made in the current system, and one is my desire to see our children far more informed and involved in the social and political world that surrounds them. It's for this reason that I've brought him here tonight: to teach him, I hope, an important lesson about the democratic process and the way governments work. Listen carefully, Daniel. You're going to be tested at the end, just to see how much you know.

This isn't in my speech, but I want to start by saying how absolutely — I think the word "disgusted" doesn't really cut how I feel coming tonight to this session to see how many people are absent and how insulting it is to people who have taken days to prepare to speak. I'm used to speaking publicly; others have never done it before. They take this event very seriously. They're distressed about what's happening to public education, and I think the show, I'm sorry to say, of all the parties is very disturbing to me and reflects what's happening to our public education system. It's just really shoddy. Let me put it that way.

To watch the faces of people — I was here this afternoon — falling asleep while people are talking, reading other material: It's unacceptable. I teach this 10-year-old child that it's rude not to listen when people are talking and I really, really urge all of you sitting here today to do that when others talk, even if they're not perhaps the most forceful speakers. We do care about our children, and I hope you do the same. Let me move on.

I start with the definition of "democracy" that I've taken from the Canadian Encyclopedia. It reads as

follows: "democracy: term originating in ancient Greece to designate a government where the people share in directing the activities of the state, as distinct from governments controlled by a single class, select group, or autocrat. The definition of democracy has been expanded, however, to describe a philosophy that insists on the right and the capacity of people, acting either directly or through representatives, to control their institutions for their own purposes."

Those are pretty big words, Daniel, so let me put it more simply. Democracy means a government that rules on behalf of the majority of the people. Now some people, including the current government of Ontario, take that to mean that democracy is nothing more than what people do on one particular day when they go to the ballot box and vote. After that, the party with the most seats, especially if it has a majority, gets to do, apparently, whatever it wants. Many of us, however, don't see it that way. Once elected, a government should continue to govern in the best interests of the people, to listen to their requests and, as best they can, respond to the wishes of the majority.

Since this government won the election, it has seemed less and less interested in hearing from the people. Well over 1,000, I think around 1,200 people, have asked to speak to this committee, Daniel, even half of them who may be here tonight, but the government wasn't interested in listening, so only a lucky few of us are here. Under the proposed Bill 104, a small group that hasn't even been elected will be able to do whatever they want to the education system for the next three years and no one will be able to oppose them and there will be so few elected trustees left that they will have little time to hear from their constituents. That doesn't sound like democracy to me.

Look around you, Daniel, and here's what you see already in Ontario: Hospitals are closing — just yesterday four in Ottawa; health services are being eroded; aid to the needy is being cut; women's shelters are being shut; protection for working people and our environment is being eliminated; and, of course, the public education system in Ontario, a system that has taken over 100 years to build, is slowly being bled to death.

Daniel, if you look at what's happening across this province, you will see this is not a government that cares about people. If you look around the world at other places where similar processes have already been happening, places such as England, New Zealand and the United States, you can see governments like our own that seem to care more about the profits of the biggest corporations and benefits for the wealthiest citizens than they do about ordinary people.

Wherever these cuts have come, we find a consistent pattern: a new system of supposedly "public" education where those kids — and I'll be honest, like you, Daniel — who have parents with a little more money, they're still able to buy them a good education, while other kids whose parents can't afford it increasingly get a second-class education. You know, Daniel, based on what I've read, I really have to say that I think Mr Snobelen was telling a fib the other day when he said there would be no second-class students in Ontario

I think there are some other areas where Mr Snobelen isn't giving us the full story. In the United States — the previous speaker spoke on it — which has suffered from almost 15 years of cuts to education, 25% of high school teachers are unqualified, and that goes up to 40% in math, and 30% of teachers quit within the first three years.

In New Zealand, where they've also had drastic changes in education, the stress of change on teachers has been so enormous that hundreds of teachers have simply quit teaching. What's more, teachers are spending so much time with administrative and financial upheavals that they have little time left for teaching. In a three-year period, ending in the spring of 1996 in New Zealand, there was a 42% turnover in primary school principals, mainly as a result of stress.

In England, the main activity of schools is now public relations and self-promotion in order to recruit and retain students in the new open marketplace of education.

Now since my son is new to all of this, could those of you who are members of the Conservative Party just raise your hands so he will know which one of you —

Mr Morley Kells (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): We're all over on this side.

Ms Naiman: You're all over here. Okay, this is the Conservative Party, Daniel. Now, Daniel, when you watch those shows on television, the ones I can't stand, you know, those awful shows like Spiderman and all that, on those shows the bad guys are always obvious. You know, they're the most creepy guys with the odd-looking weird faces and so on. But I want you to look, Daniel, and Gavin too who's sitting here, because I want you to see that in real life the bad guys look just like everybody else — well, okay, almost just like the rest of us. We don't know too many who wear blue suits.

I brought you here tonight in part because I want you to see those faces. I want you to look at them. I want you to see the faces of the people who want to take away the things you love most about school. I want you to took at them carefully because it's not going to be too long from now when you and Gavin and all your friends will be able to vote and I want you to remember who tried to steal good-quality public education away from the citizens of this province.

I want all of you, every one of you, to look at these guys and I want you to tell them to their faces — I ask the members of the Conservative Party to tell them which one of the things are going to be taken away from them if Bill 104 passes and you make your proposed spending cuts. Which one of you is willing to tell my son that his beloved hockey team will be gone in the next year, or his after-school program, or the teacher-librarian, or his music program, or his intergenerational choir, or his gym class, or that instead of the already unacceptable 33 he now has in his class, he will be in a class of 36, 40, or 44? Or to tell him that some of his friends won't get special ed, gifted programs or ESL programs in the future?

You see, Daniel, governments are able to do bad things to people by not having to look at us when they do it. They get others, such as the Education Improvement Commission, to do it for them. Bill 104 is just the beginning. We're being told we're getting more democ-

racy in new school councils, but with schools being given less money, it will then force us to make the cuts, force us to choose between your music or your gym program, to choose whether to get rid of the teacher-librarian or raise your class size, force us to sell off our school to the private sector piece by piece in the hope of maintaining the integrity of your programs. That doesn't seem very fair, does it, Daniel or Gavin, asking us to take the blame for something we didn't do and didn't even want?

There's one more really important lesson and it's my last for tonight that I want you to learn: Democracy is not something that's given to us by others. It's something our ancestors had to fight for and now that we've got it, we've got to be vigilant that it isn't taken away.

Here in Canada most of us take democracy for granted. But what we're seeing now, Daniel, is that democracy is ever so slowly being eroded in this province. That's why your mom, your dad and many others are increasingly speaking out. We want to tell this government that we reject Bill 104. We reject their anti-people agenda. We reject cuts to education. We reject the myth, and it is a myth, that there just isn't any money out there. We're telling all of you in all the political parties that we won't go away until our government, and I don't care who's in power, gives us the education system that the citizens across this province deserve. Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Your time is up. Thank you very

 $\boldsymbol{Ms}$   $\boldsymbol{Naiman:}$  Good. He was worried he'd have to say something.

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#### PATRICIA ALDANA

The Acting Chair: Can I call Patricia Aldana forward, please. Welcome. Thank you for coming.

Ms Patricia Aldana: Thank you for inviting me to appear before this committee. I'd like to declare my membership in several special interest groups right before I start. I'm a parent of four children, two of whom are still in schools in this city. I'm a resident of Toronto, hence bound to be a big loser in what you're proposing. Finally, I'm an anachronism. I'm a children's book publisher. I don't make computer software. I don't make materials that sing, dance or move. They're just plain books.

There's so much wrong with Bill 104 it's hard to know where to begin, so I'll focus on a matter dear to my heart and which I consider to be fundamental to education: the ability to read and the natural outgrowth of that skill, which is to be able to write, something that I think should be at the absolute heart of every child's education. I fear that what you're proposing, and the view of education which seems to be held by your government, will be devastating to literacy in Ontario and to children's ability to read and write here.

What is my evidence? The first proof is the infamous KPMG study — I thought it was the KPMG study, but maybe it's the Ernst and Young study — which places school libraries in some kind of limbo of otherness, not part of classroom learning. That is utterly preposterous. School libraries lie at the heart of the teaching of reading and writing in any school.

The second proof: At a recent parents' meeting at my child's elementary school, Isabel Bassett, who's my MPP, and two officials from Mr Snobelen's office said boldly and cheerfully when I questioned what would happen to school libraries that they were going to save school libraries by getting rid of school librarians and replacing them with technicians. That's freeing up money to save school libraries. That is an oxymoron, in my opinion: to save a library by removing the librarian. The school library is its librarian. That is all that it is. It's a bunch of books, but it is the school librarian.

I can't even begin to sketch an argument as to the critical role of school libraries and librarians, but I'd like to just tell you a few things that a teacher-librarian does in the schools, in case you don't know.

One of the most important things they do is to engender a love of reading in children in the school. They're at the absolute heart of the book and the school. They select the books. That requires extensive knowledge and training. Canadian books, for example, although they're internationally acknowledged to be world class, are unlikely to be known to technicians who have no training in librarianship. This, combined with the fascination that seems to be reigning with software — which is almost 100% American; there is very little Canadian software — means that the problem we have with no knowledge about Canada existing in the schools is going to be aggravated to a great degree.

School librarians bring authors and illustrators into schools. This shows children that real people write books. It engages them in those books and it engages them in the idea of writing and illustrating as a possible career as well as something that they can do in their time at school, something positive and fun.

School librarians teach the principal and the other teachers about books, so that they can use them in their curriculum. They help to build classroom libraries. Every school uses classroom libraries now to teach or they used to when they had money to buy classroom libraries. They don't seem to any more.

Librarians are essential for teaching children how to do research. When you get kids doing research on the Net — I don't know. It's amazing to me that Tories could support using the Net for learning. Have you ever used the Net yourselves? It is full of misinformation. It is not selected, it is not evaluated, it is not edited; it is none of the things a good book is. It's a place where you can have a lot of fun and you can get all kinds of stuff from all over the place, but it is not really currently a place where you can learn anything, do good research. You need a school librarian if you're going to be getting kids to do that, to show them how to use this mass of undigested information. It does surprise me that Tories would support the Net the way that they seem to be.

Also, of course, there's the fascination with computers and the idea that kids can learn how to read from a computer. I'm sorry; reading is a lot more than just sitting and looking at a bunch of words on a screen. You still need books to learn how to read.

But let's go back to your plans. Mrs Bassett's comments that some school boards across this province had failed to fall in line with the budget cuts and continued

and insisted on having school librarians has forced, according to her, the ministry to take this drastic action I think is a pretty sorry comment on the school boards and a pretty sorry comment on our future.

The Ministry of Education is not a place that I want to look to to save us or to save our school libraries. Over the past 20 years, the ministry could have done a great deal to encourage school libraries, to help them to be richer, to have more staffing, to have more book budgets. They've never done that. The Ministry of Education has never shown any interest in increasing book budgets in this province or in supporting the development of school libraries. Ontario has one of the lowest per capita expenditures in Canada on books, and when you want to ask why kids in Ontario don't perform very well, one of the reasons you might think to look to is the fact that books are increasingly not a part of the schools, and it's going to be a lot worse.

The place I'd like to put my faith is in the school boards, which have done a great job with our school libraries. In such boards, and many of them are in Metro Toronto but they are across the province as well, there are schools where a single inspired teacher-librarian has inculcated a love of books and reading which will last for a whole lifetime. These people are an irreplaceable treasure. They will be eliminated by your Minister of Education.

Think about the ministry itself. It's been responsible for the common curriculum, the mishandled destreaming of grade 9, abandoning of the enforcement of Circular 14, a key tool in the Canadianization of education in this province. Are we supposed to trust these people to be running the education for all the kids in Ontario? I don't think so. We do need education reform: slow, gradual and intelligent, built by local communities within a properly constructed and funded framework.

We know why this is happening, and there's no question about it: Bill 104 is a way to allow you to fund your tax cut. I don't think that's fair to the children.

Mr Snobelen has said that he believes in radical change, that you need to break things to change them. This reminds me of the Maoist saying that you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs. He is a radical, and he will ensure that a generation of children in this province will be losers. It will take decades to undo this kind of damage. You're going to lose a generation of readers. When are they ever going to learn to read? Meanwhile, children in other jurisdictions and in other countries are becoming better educated. Our kids will have to compete with them, and how can they do that?

Mr Froese: Thank you very much. You had indicated that you feel the school boards are doing a good job. I probably couldn't agree with you more with respect to not enough funding and not enough resources going into books for our children in our schools. We had a presentation earlier today that kind of said the reverse of — the individual who made the presentation was upset that their school board only spent \$80 per child on books and they spent on other things, like a quarter of their budget on photocopying instead of books. So on one hand you are saying that you're in support of your school board and what they have done, and when we try and look at this

whole situation, everybody knows there need to be changes in education, but as a government, we're trying to balance off what is right here.

What is your comment with respect to those arguments where people are saying that our school boards aren't

spending enough on books?

**Ms Aldana:** I think you can mandate a per capita expenditure on books without getting rid of school boards.

Mr Froese: The school boards control the budgets on

books, so why aren't they doing that?

Ms Aldana: I just said I believe the school system can do with some reform, but I don't think that means you have to kill the school boards in order to get books into the schools. In British Columbia, for example, there are very creative programs for getting books into schools.

Mr Froese: So why aren't the school boards doing it

then?

**Ms Aldana:** There are provincial programs for getting books into schools. They still have school boards in British Columbia.

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Mrs McLeod: I'll try and stay on 104, although your focus on reading and the importance of reading and where that's going to fall gets me thinking about the proposed secondary school curriculum reforms, which are to on our agenda tonight but which, as you know, involve significantly reduced hours for the teaching of English. I think too that is all about cost-cutting and not about education, let alone about literacy skills.

But maybe you would just comment on how much more difficult it might be to make the government understand the importance of the school librarian if there is no local school board to make that case to.

Ms Aldana: I think where the school boards have been committed to school libraries is where you have, as in Toronto, for example, entire structures which have

created excellent, powerful school libraries.

By the way, when people say the children of Ontario are not a good product — I would just like to return to that question someone asked. My children have gone to school in France, and I'll tell you one thing about children from Ontario, and particularly children from Toronto, one way in which they're incredibly successful citizens of this world. They are not racist, they are not hating of other people, they are not xenophobic. They are broadminded and they are children who know something about the rest of the world as well as about themselves. I think part of that, personally, with my bias towards reading, is because they have been very well educated, and I think that is one of the most successful things about Canada.

When I come back here, I think we have really produced something in this country by producing these kids who are so tolerant and open and sophisticated in terms of the world. That is a triumph because, let me tell you, they can't do it in a lot of other places, the United States and France included.

Mr Martin: I obviously agree with you that books and reading are really important. I've said earlier today I have four kids still in school, and I love it when I come home and they're all off someplace reading. You have men-

tioned in your presentation the threat that you see to libraries and librarians and that kind of thing by way of this bill. We've had other people who talked about English as a second language and a whole lot of other programs that the Toronto school board particularly has spent a lot of time and effort and resources putting together and presenting to their kids.

The question I was going to ask you, which you have already answered and you might want to expand on some more, is this question of mediocrity, that the reason we're changing the system and making the drastic change that is being proposed in Bill 104 is that we're producing a

mediocre product.

Ms Aldana: No. And by the way, it's not just Toronto that has great school boards. It's not. There are other great school boards across this province, and there are ones where an enormous amount of work goes on in reading and writing that I know a lot about. We're not producing mediocre kids. There are mediocre school boards in this province, absolutely, and they need help and funding, and there's a lot the province could be doing to help kids, where they have not been properly served by their local situation, to improve. But to destroy what's good — the Toronto board should be taken as a model for the province instead of being destroyed, it seems to me. There's so much that could be done within the existing context.

The Acting Chair: Ms Aldana, thank you kindly for coming and sharing your views with us this evening. We

appreciate it.

#### ANN LANDREY

The Acting Chair: I call Mr Adrian Heaps, please. Ms Ann Landrey: Members of the committee, Mr Heaps has been called away on a family emergency and he asked me — my name is Ann Landrey — to present his deposition in his absence. I will do it the best service

I can, but if I stumble, please bear with me.

Over the last few weeks, parents and educators across Ontario have been subjected to the government's recent proposals to drastically reduce the number of school boards from 167 to 66. As the committee is aware, the government also intends to severely reduce the number of trustees as well as staffing in order to satisfy their desire to, as Mr Harris puts it, put our children at the front of the class.

I am not an educator, but from my vantage point, it doesn't take an educated person to see that the government has not learned the fundamentals of what it actually takes to teach a child. We have been told that our children are poorly educated and not adequately prepared for the economic rigours of modern society. Mr Harris and Minister Snobelen have also tried to sell the idea that our children must be trained for specific job skills in order to compete in the international marketplace.

Let's look at these arguments. First, the idea that education must be job-specific is patently wrong. After the Second World War, the Canadian government funded all sorts of job programs to employ the masses who returned from the war. The job training was specific and directed towards specialized manufacturing jobs that for a while became high-paying. But changing times and new

technologies made these specialized job skills gradually obsolete, leaving thousands out of work with no place to apply their highly specialized skills. Now the government proposes to once again champion job-specific training. The first lesson the government should learn is not to repeat the mistakes of history.

If we want to truly educate our children to be productive and contributing members of society, we need to look at an education that teaches the whole individual, not just a part of him. We need to teach people the logic of thinking and decision-making and we also need to expose young students to the creative side of their personality. Without creativity, we don't have thinkers. Without creativity, we don't have people who will make a difference, not just economically, not just socially, but also in their personal lives.

If we once again look at history, we will see that the greatest inventors, like Leonardo da Vinci, Galileo and Einstein, were all people who had an education that combined the best of the sciences with the best of the arts, liberating in them the creativity and lateral thinking that made them icons and models to follow.

The idea of providing a well-rounded education is almost universally subscribed to, yet the government believes it knows more than the Royal Commission on Learning, more than the combined expertise of principals and teachers and researchers — and since he allowed me to make comments on his presentation, I would add parents as well. I'm sure he would concur with me in that sentiment.

On other fronts, Mr Snobelen has said that publicly funded education in Ontario is too expensive. The truth is that Ontario's per pupil funding is the 46th lowest of 63 jurisdictions in Canada and the US. Ontario currently spends less per pupil than any of the school boards in Michigan, New York, Quebec or Manitoba. Of course we can always reduce costs. We can also double class size and theoretically reduce the number of teachers by half. We could ration chalk and have students double-team on computers. But would this would not improve the quality of education.

No one is naïve enough to think that improvements are not needed, and many have suggested that merging a number of services and even some boards could cut costs in addition to improving the quality of education, yet the government's proposals offer a much darker view of how education should be run in this province. The first stage of this proposal is to take all of our money that we allocate to education and send it to the Ontario government. The second stage is to reduce the number of school boards and trustees and to instead replace them with school advisory councils. All of this, along with the revamping of over 600 academic programs, will be overseen by a government-appointed Education Improvement Commission.

I am a little surprised. On one hand the government tells us that our children should be better prepared for the world, yet on the other, they offer a loosely woven set of ideas that they call a plan. Parents in this province do not expect their teachers and principals to come to school without a prepared curriculum, so why should we expect anything less from Mr Snobelen? Shouldn't we expect the

government to come to the table with a coherent, well-thought-out plan that speaks to the true educational needs of children in this province? Is this the kind of example of learning that we want to set for students to follow?

Secondly, the government believes that parent-run councils can run the essential aspects of a school's operation. As a chair of a council and after having talked to over 100 other councils, I can categorically tell you that working parents have neither the time, the inclination nor the required skill — and I'm adding energy — to run a school, no more than you or members of this committee should be responsible for offering advice on running a hospital or an auto plant.

Parents want a definite say in their children's education, but generally speaking, they respect teachers and principals enough to know they are the real experts. Perhaps Mr Snobelen and Mr Harris could learn a lesson from this philosophy.

Something else to think about: The Ontario government wants to have all property taxes paid directly to them. The funds would go into a huge melting pot of money. The government would then allocate a new budget as they see fit back to school boards. The problem with this is that schools will now have to fight in competition for every other program at the provincial level. Furthermore, the so-called Education Improvement Commission will have the power to approve budgets to the minister.

Essentially, this will leave parents out of the key decision-making process. "Don't worry," says the government, "parents will still have decision-making powers," that is, when it comes to the kindergarten picnic and staff barbecues.

Admittedly, criticizing the government is not enough. Educators and parents have to offer constructive alternatives if we really want to improve our system. Well, here's a couple of suggestions. The government keeps talking about goals and expectations, so why not apply this thinking to improving our education system? I suggest that the Minister of Education clearly lay out his plans to include an educational bill of rights that would form the foundation of a new educational policy. I would then suggest he clearly lay out goals and expectations for each school board to follow. This could include budget, curriculum demands and reasonable time limits to accomplish the job.

If the government were truly interested in improving education in Ontario, it would look at applying this idea to one or two boards, see if it works, assess the results, and then if successful, apply it to other boards. It would reduce costs, improve education standards and take full advantage of the vast reservoir of knowledge that exists in the educational community. Mr Snobelen would be surprised at what he could achieve if he decided to work with people instead of against them.

Unfortunately the government is not that concerned with education. Their mandate is to satisfy their budget projections by dramatically increasing their revenues. So where is the largest untapped cache of revenues? It is, of course, in the treasure chest of property taxes. From this money, Mr Harris can fulfil his tax rebate promise. But

I can't help but think of all the studies that clearly point out that education is not a cost to the province but rather an investment in the future of Ontario. The returns on this investment are incalculable, with returns on jobs, less crime and better citizens, that could set an example, not just to the rest of Canada but to the world.

As with Bill 103, the government chooses not to look for constructive alternatives but rather to dig in their heels for what could be a good idea that has been mutated into political gain. As John Marquis once stated, "The problem with politicians is that when they get an

idea, they get it all wrong."

This is not a time to dig in one's heels and posture like two kids in a playground, for what we are talking about is the future of education. That goes way beyond the government's mandate. This is a time to set an example to students and to show them that we have their best interests at heart and not the government's.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, Ms Landrey. We

appreciate that. Your full time is up.

#### KATIE BROCK

The Acting Chair: Let me call Katie Brock. Thank

you for coming. You have 10 minutes.

Ms Katie Brock: Before I start, I just want to provide you with a little bit of context. While I might not be an expert in government or in education, I have gone to school in the Halton Board of Education, which I think was an excellent board of education and which was at that time under the provincial direction of Premier Bill Davis. So I think I have a historical perspective to some extent on personal experiences with the school board, as well as current experiences with the city of Toronto school board and the East York school board, with which a program I worked with is affiliated. I think those two are also excellent models of what a school board can achieve.

I'm particularly impressed by things that the Halton Board of Education and the Toronto Board of Education have spent money for in order to support their students and make sure they fulfil their entire potential. This includes things like special education, adult education and

support services for students who need them.

That said, I want to share with you some comments of one of the adult students who is in my program. The people in my program are primarily English-speaking, most of them are citizens of Canada or have been residents for quite a long time and they're adults who need assistance with developing or upgrading their basic adult literacy and numeracy skills.

One of these adult learners mentioned that she was really concerned about Bill 104, and her concerns and mine overlap. So this afternoon when I talked to her, I decided to try and present both her comments and mine. I only had since yesterday morning to prepare this, so it's not comprehensive. We both also had difficulty reading Bill 104, so I'm not sure I'm addressing all of the points there.

The name of the learner that I'm going to describe is Cathy. Cathy says, and I agree: "We have the right to say how adult students and children are educated" in this province. "Money comes from all of our taxes and so we should have a say in what our money is going to pay for."

I would add that this bill does not tell me how I or anyone else who pays taxes in this province will have a say in the proposed structures. The improvement commission, their designated experts and the improvement committee members are going to be appointed by the province. Their pay will, I'm sure, be generous, commensurate with their vast powers and duties.

At the same time, school board trustees, who are elected, will not be paid a wage that matches their hours, duties and efforts. I would add that in the city of Toronto, they're not just restricted to minor decisions; they're dealing with a large budget, they're dealing with a context in which many of the newcomers to Toronto need additional services like ESL. Many families are living in poverty and need additional support services to make sure those children are successful, and many people need additional services after school, such as adult education.

Some people are to be excluded from the few elected positions that will still be available if they happen to be married to an employee of a mega school board. I think that's an awful lot of people to exclude from performing a civic duty if you use the proposed amalgamated Metro school board as an example. There's no explanation as well in the bill as to why spouses should be excluded.

What the bill does tell us is who will not be consulted in the making of policy and the allocation of our money.

Cathy also says that the proposed Education Improvement Commission and committees they appoint "should be held responsible for what they do: responsible to the public and to the courts. These powers should have some people to answer to. Even a Supreme Court judge can't do something wrong and not be pulled from the bench. He or she has to go before the courts to answer for what they have done." Yet this commission won't have to answer to courts.

I agree with Cathy. I think this bill declares in very fine and elaborate legal terms all the actions the commission, the committees and their experts will not be held responsible for, and all the legal acts and statutes it is not subject to, yet the name of the bill specifically mentions accountability as one of it's major functions.

A related question that she had was: "Who is going to choose these people? They should be elected to their jobs by the people." I would also add, what qualifications

should they have?

Cathy asked me: "If there are only two boards to represent the northern part of the province, how will they (the improvement commission and improvement committee members) get to meetings if they are far away?" She's pretty familiar with this because she's a representative of a learners' council in a literacy group. They have a very, very limited budget to be able to travel all together, so they do most of their things by teleconferencing.

In an era of cost-cutting, how would it be cost-effective to require further travel for commission, committee members and trustees? Who could afford to do the travelling if they weren't getting paid to do it? How would local community needs and concerns be familiar to these individuals? How would local communities get to

meetings to speak to them face to face? How is this better than locally directed, locally elected and locally accessible school boards?

If the money for the Metro-area school boards decreases, Cathy says: "There is going to be an overload of students for the teaching staff if they do cutbacks to the schools. Then there will not be anyone who is educated enough to make a half-decent living, and the government will have to support them in the end, for them to survive."

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If the funds available to education in Metro and all of its necessary supports are reduced, you'll be increasing the number of students who don't have a decent and equitable chance to achieve their full potential. You'll swell the numbers of those over 21 who will then need adult education classes, while at the same time making the boards choose who needs or deserves their services the most. In the Education Act as it stands the provision of services to those over 21 years of age is optional in spite of the fact that the proficiency level of the adults in a household increases the proficiency level of the children in that home. This is not just my opinion; this is something that's been found and can be supported.

I would add that currently all the adult literacy programs in Metro have a waiting list. The Ministry of Education has said through it's literacy branch that there is no more money in the pot. All the programs I know are currently struggling to serve the numbers of adults who come to them and who want help with reading, writing and basic math. We know this is only the tip of the iceberg, as reported in the international adult literacy

survey that Canada participated in.

If the board of education money that goes to literacy programs and adult basic education classes disappears and we are left with only the current pot of ministry funds, which is insufficient, fewer adult learners will be served. The international adult literacy survey that Canada so proudly participated in describes the importance of a literate society. How will this literate society be ensured in Ontario when the support for adult literacy classes and programs will have to compete with children's education for shrinking funds? How will those who need special services get them? How will people who need special education right now, after they become 21, continue to receive some support for additional upgrading or prevention of regression of their skills?

If the province through these mega-boards takes control of our funds and reduces the money that currently makes Metro a centre for educational excellence, it will be showing that the words "accountability," "effectiveness" and "improvement" are just empty sounds, devoid of meaning in the real world where the rest of us work, learn and pay taxes.

Do you want to tell Cathy that it's not important for her to continue to work towards improving her skills because she's an adult?

Mrs McLeod: I guess all I can say is that I share the concerns. You've raised so many questions, all of which deserve answers, and I'm not sure there are going to be answers in time to relieve anybody's anxieties.

One of the areas in which I have a lot of anxiety is the whole area of adult education. In fact the two spectrums,

junior kindergarten and adult education, are two areas where the government has already made very significant cuts in funding. The cuts in adult education for adult day school classes are about 50%, and in some areas outside of Toronto the reduction in the number of adults in day school classes is as much as 80%. No wonder people are worried about what's going to happen to adult education under the scenario of government funding. You've raised questions that need answers and I hope there'll be some forthcoming.

Mr Martin: You certainly paint a very clear picture of what we can expect if we go ahead with this legislation and life unfolds as we expect it will if the attendant reduction in money happens as well.

All of this is premised on I think the unproven statement that now the product that is produced by our education system is somehow inferior or not good enough so we have to make these major changes in order to improve that. I know that we have changes to make and I know that the system isn't perfect. With all of us participating, I'm confident that we can make it better and continue to make it better, but is the product that we're putting out now mediocre, in your experience?

Ms Brock: I don't think I have the expertise to speak to that unless you're asking me why the people who are in my program are there. If that's what you're asking me, then I could speak to that, but I don't know about the product of the overall education system in Ontario.

I know that this is a historical concern and that since even the 17th century, post-secondary institutions were complaining about the inferior product of students that they had to serve in first year, so this is a cyclical thing. It's not new. I think that improvements could be made; improvements can always be made. I'm just saying I don't think Bill 104 addresses any of the areas which I would suggest could be improved.

Mr Flaherty: Thank you, Ms Brock, and also Cathy, on whose behalf you spoke, which I found interesting as an adult student's point of view.

I want to just mention to you the role of community colleges in adult education, not to say that the role of school boards is not important in that also, but there is some overlap there with respect to which some community colleges have expressed concern, and some school boards, in that we have two sources delivering a similar service. That will have to be addressed at some point, I think.

I did want to speak briefly with you about English as a second language, adult education, children with special needs and the funding changes that are being made with respect to education in Ontario in this sense: I think you'll agree that all persons with special needs should have equal access to adequate funding so that they can take the literacy programs and take the special needs programs that they may require, and that the proposed system will eliminate the phenomenon of rich and poor school boards in Ontario, some boards with greater resources than others, and that this is an appropriate goal so that we have equal funding available for persons with special needs.

Ms Brock: If what I understand you are saying is that the proposed formula to equalize the amount spent per

capita on students across the province will be achieved by this bill and that that will solve the problem of people with special needs who need supportive funding and services, I can't equate the two. I don't think that taking away funding from services that are being provided in Metro Toronto will help people with special needs who need targeted educational services in other parts of the province. I don't see how decreasing the amount available will help provide those services.

The Acting Chair: Ms Brock, I have to thank you for coming. Your time has gone over.

# STEVE SHALLHORN ALLISON SHALLHORN

The Acting Chair: Mr Steve Shallhorn? Mr Shallhorn, this is your lawyer to your left, I see.

Mr Steve Shallhorn: Yes, I'm represented by counsel here this evening.

The Acting Chair: Welcome. You know you have 10 minutes

**Mr Shallhorn:** Allison is nine years old and is one of my two daughters in the public school system here in Toronto.

I'd like to thank the committee for allowing us to be present this evening and also thank the committee staff for chasing me down. At risk of public embarrassment, I got my numbers mixed up and thought I was appearing to speak about Bill 103, so I'm certainly glad I didn't invest a lot of time in a written presentation for the committee.

But while I was preparing for that, a lot of my thoughts wandered to the school system. I think that Allison and I can bring some comparisons that may be of interest to the committee, because for her short time that she's been on this planet, Allison and I have lived in Toronto, in Washington, DC, in London, England, and in Ottawa. We've had exposure to education systems in all of these places, and in particular I want to share with you very briefly some of the experiences we had in Washington, DC, which for all of us is probably an example of a city and a place that's gone wrong and that is, I think, relevant to both Bills 103 and 104.

While we were in Washington, we spent a bit of time going to what little community fairs and events there were, and one of the things that struck me as a bit odd very early on was the local school principal out very visibly in these meetings, basically hustling for students, trying very hard to convince parents to have their children go to the school. I was a little bit puzzled as to why.

A couple of months later, in a chance social occasion, I met a school trustee from Washington, DC, and he explained to me that only about half of the people in the District of Columbia actually send their kids to the public school system, that the system has broken down over the last 20 years such that essentially anybody who can afford to sends their kids to private schools, and they send their kids to private schools usually outside of the district.

This trustee explained to me that one of the problems they had been having in that city is that one of the sort of neighbourhood social fabric things that happens is that parents get to meet each other and neighbours get to meet each other often through their children, and if their kids are being sent off to different private schools away from the public system, you have a real breakdown in the fabric of neighbourhoods. That was blamed as one of the root problems — not so much root problems but one of the continuing parts of the downward spiral of the city of Washington. In Washington, there are about half the number of trustees for a larger population.

While we were in London, Allison had a chance to participate in the public school system there. The social fabric wasn't as degenerated in London as it was in Washington, but there the most noticeable problem was capital, the physical shape of the schools themselves. They were simply appalling, everything from the state of the stairwells to the condition of the roofs to the play-ground equipment, which was almost non-existent. It was obviously a system in decay. I think both of these systems were suffering from lack of funding and lack of accountability.

One of the things we've noticed here in Toronto, in the two years since we've moved back to Toronto — I live in ward 11; I bought a home on Yarmouth Road — is the relative accessibility of our school trustees. We see them socially, we see them at community events, and it's nice to be able to speak to someone whose responsibility it is to run the school system and to run into them often enough that you don't really expect them to remember your name but to remember you as a familiar face. I think that's very important.

I support full-time school trustees and I support them getting a half-decent wage so that they can spend their full time administering the public school system and being accountable to myself and my neighbours. I think it's totally unrealistic in a large city like this to expect people to run an education system for 100 bucks a week. I think that's an insult. I think it's an insult to myself as a parent, I think it's an insult to the children, and I think it's an insult to anyone who is considering spending their life administering the school system.

Allison would like to say a few things and then I'd like to end with a question.

Miss Allison Shallhorn: Hello. My name is Allison. I'm in grade 3 and I go to Palmerston Avenue Public School. I know I'm just a kid but I am worried that I might lose my education. I like gym, music and library and I'm excited about learning English while I'm in French. I have already lost a little bit of my library. Please try to make my education better. Thank you.

Mr Shallhorn: In the time that I have left, I'd like to ask committee members who support Bill 104 why they think an Education Improvement Commission is going to be a better system than the system of full-time paid trustees that we have in the city of Toronto.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, Mr Shallhorn, for your presentation, and Allison, thank you very much for yours as well.

Interruption.

The Acting Chair: Would you please let me respond. I heard his question and the members are free to answer, but we also have a rotating system. The first is Mr

Martin, who has a chance to ask a question for a minute and a half, and then the government side. Presumably members of the government side support this legislation and they will respond to your question. That's the way it works. I know you're getting impatient in the galleries there, but there's an approach here we follow.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Chair, I'd be happy to waive my

time

The Acting Chair: Okay, fine. Thank you.

Mr Martin: I guess the most interesting part of your presentation for me was the fact that you've been exposed to different systems. The premise that this bill is being pushed on is that our system is somehow inferior and that we're not producing graduates who can participate in the world in a way that's competitive and constructive and positive. Perhaps you or Allison could talk a bit about that and why it is, I think, from your presentation, you find that what we have here is that much better than those other places that you've been.

Mr Shallhorn: There's no question that the school system here in Toronto is just vastly superior to that in Washington, DC, and in London, England, and I think you don't have to spend a lot of time in those systems to see the difference. It's not just the quality of life inside the classrooms, inside the schools, but just, as I said, the fabric of the neighbourhoods. In the school yard that Allison used to play in, it was no joke that in the morning parents would go through looking for the hypodermics, and on two occasions I had to remove them. That is the level of the public school system in these cities. I think what we have in Toronto is vastly superior and I think it needs to be preserved and needs to be protected.

The Acting Chair: Mrs McLeod has given up her time so that the government can answer the question that was

posed by Mr Shallhorn.

Mr Skarica: Sir, the reason we're doing this is that — perhaps I could refer to some of the evidence that we've heard, not from us but from where you've been sitting. For example, today we heard from Sim Brigden, who is the fund-raising committee chair of the Davisville Public School Parents Association and who sits on the school staffing committee. He had this to say about the Toronto system: "From meetings with school trustees, superintendents, Chairman David Moll and comptroller of finance Ron Trbovitch, I can only conclude that the board's primary agenda is to promote its own bloated bureaucracy."

We heard yesterday from a trustee from the Metro separate school board who indicated that in his long experience with that board, his opinion of the trustees there was that "they had failed to protect the public purse and the quality of education."

So there are a lot of people, contrary —

Interruption.

Mr Skarica: All right. We heard from another fellow —

Interruption.

The Acting Chair: Order.

Mr Skarica: You want me to answer it; I'm answering

Mrs McLeod: Mr Chairman, on a point of order: I waived my time so that the government could answer the question from the government's perspective.

The Acting Chair: We'll be out of time anyway.

Mr Skarica: The government's perspective is that there are a lot of people who feel the education system needs improvement and feel that the trustees in the Metro board and other boards, to quote the Metro school board trustee, who was a trustee himself, have "failed to protect the public purse and the quality of education."

The Acting Chair: Final comment, Mr Shallhorn.

Mr Shallhorn: My experience in Toronto and in other cities is that the level of representation here in Toronto is excellent and I believe the level of accountability is excellent. I would disagree with the person from Davisville and I guess I would disagree then with the rationale of this government. I think Bill 104 is a step in the wrong direction.

The Acting Chair: Mr Shallhorn and Allison, thank you very kindly for coming this evening.

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### SARAH LATHA-ELLIOTT

The Acting Chair: I'd like to call Sarah Latha-Elliott, please.

Ms Sarah Latha-Elliott: Before I start, I'd just like to say that I've decided to address my comments very directly to Mr Snobelen and other education officials because I think they really need to know how young

people and high school students are feeling.

I have found it very hard to be a student lately. I've found it really hard to concentrate on homework, to attend classes, to practice the piano and to have a social life. I've found it really hard to do all the things that I do normally in my everyday life as a high school student. It has been hard because I've been so busy doing the job that the government should be doing. Because you haven't once asked students how we feel about our education, we've had to organize our own process for consultation. During this process, high school students have gone around from school to school explaining Bill 104 and answering questions. We have become very good at answering questions, but there are still some which are asked at every school and that I have yet to figure out an answer to. "Where is the representative from the government?" they ask me. "Why aren't they here to explain these things to us? Why haven't they even responded to our request for a representative?"

I can say nothing to these students because it's true that time and time again we have been trying to invite you to come and speak to us and you have not even responded to our requests. Maybe that's standard procedure around here. After all, you must probably receive many requests, but when not once do you show your faces to us, people start to wonder. Students have started to wonder, and I'm telling you that we're losing faith in this government's ability to make decisions for us.

Today in high schools all across Metro a student referendum was held to give young people an opportunity to comment on Bills 103 and 104, provincial downloading and democracy in general. Watch for the results. Young people have informed opinions and you had better start listening.

I take Bill 104 very personally. I take it personally because you've bombarded the public with sound bites

claiming that this is about "getting our kids back to the head of the class," yet I see nothing in Bill 104 that will improve my education. I have read the Bill in its entirety and simply cannot believe that there is no mention of student involvement in the decision-making process. You go on at great length about the role of parents, community leaders, businesses and teachers on local councils. You name virtually everyone as a stakeholder in education, but you don't name students.

Have you forgotten that schools, in accordance with ministry guidelines, teach young people not only about the three Rs but also to be responsible and participatory members of society? You cannot instill those values in us and then turn around and lock us out of the process. We've been taught very well by this education system

and we're not being fooled by it.

With regard to your proposed amalgamation of the school boards, I guess I'm just a little bit confused about the logic. It seems plain to me that when it comes to maintaining a healthy democracy, smaller is better. Forgive my simplicity, but isn't it obvious that the more people an elected official has to represent, the less accessible they are to their constituents?

Last year I had the honour of being the first elected student trustee at the Toronto Board of Education. This honour came with the enormous task of representing 32,000 secondary students, fewer than one third the number of constituents each trustee will have in the new amalgamated school board. I know how hard it is to always be accessible to everyone when there are so many people, but we must always remember that accessibility to our politicians is a cornerstone of democracy.

I turn now to your famous election promise not to touch the classroom. If there was a point in all of this that made me realize that you have no idea about the reality of education in the 1990s, it was when I read your definition of the classroom. How can you even suggest that guidance and libraries are not an integral part of what we learn in classrooms? If you haven't realized yet that education is about the whole picture and not chopping it up into little bits, you have no place in the Ministry of Education.

One cannot separate the important role of classroom teachers from the important support we get from guidance counsellors, social workers, librarians and custodians. If not for these people, our schools would be dangerous, sterile and uninspiring environments, certainly not environments conducive to learning. I want to ask you straight out whether you intend to slash funding for these important services because you do not consider them part of the classroom. Come clean about your intentions and stop hiding behind ill-contrived definitions.

Interruption.

The Acting Chair: Order, please. I'm sorry. I'll ask you to leave if you do that again, so please don't do that.

Please proceed.

Ms Latha-Elliott: I want to conclude by saying that I am one of thousands of students across this province who have come to see ourselves as agents of change. Our opposition to Bill 104 is not a defence of the status quo. We believe fundamentally that real change cannot be forced upon people against their will. There are always

things to be improved upon — no one is denying that — but we need to be part of figuring out what works and what doesn't. As someone who is in the system right now, I can tell you that a lot works.

Don't dismiss us, because we are a generation with the patience to effect positive and democratic changes.

The Acting Chair: Thank you very much. We have a little over a minute for each side, so the government side first.

Mr Skarica: Do you know an Andrew Graham?

Ms Latha-Elliott: Pardon?

Mr Skarica: Do you know Andrew Graham? He's the president of the Ontario Secondary School Students' Association. Contrary to what's been said, I did listen to your presentation. You said students have been locked out of the process. I was in charge of the secondary school reform and we met with him on behalf of the OSSSA and other student groups. You will find that a number of submissions made by students such as yourself will be present in the report, so I dispute the fact that you have been locked out of the process, because I can assure you, you haven't been.

Ms Latha-Elliott: I guess I just don't consider consultation with an organization that receives money from the Ministry of Education to be adequate consultation.

Mr Skarica: I might add as well that I've gone to a number of classes and gone into the classrooms and seen what's happened day to day. I've done that in many classes on many occasions.

Interruption.

The Acting Chair: I ask people who are here, please don't interrupt.

Mrs McLeod: I can assure you that there has been no student consultation on Bill 104, even if there has been on secondary school curriculum, because there has been no consultation on Bill 104 outside of these hearings. You are the second student who's appeared before us at these hearings.

We have asked the question as to what will happen to student representation on school boards under the newly amalgamated boards. We don't have an answer to that question yet, but it seems quite apparent that you will continue to be shut out as students because there won't be room for student representatives on the mega-boards. That is a continuing concern.

We're looking forward to hearing the results of the student referendum, which I respect as being a student initiative and will have great validity and should have some impact because of that. I'm also driving Hansard

crazy once again.

If there is time, I'd be very interested in knowing your views, because one of the out-of-classroom expenditures that may be subject to some cuts, based on the toolkits Mr Snobelen has tried to present in the past, is prep time, as to whether you see that as having an effect on your classroom education.

Ms Latha-Elliott: I guess I consider the elimination or cut to prep time as being very much cutting the access students have to their teachers, because one of the things teachers always do is make that preparation time they have also a time when students can come and have an opportunity to speak to them. So it's not always a time when teachers are, as they've been accused, taking their coffee breaks or whatever. In fact, I would even wonder whether they have time to prepare their lessons because they're so busy talking to us all the time and trying to help us. I guess I worry a lot about that because I don't think they can really prepare adequately if they don't have that time.

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Mr Martin: I want to thank you for coming tonight too, and I think it's really important that we hear from people like yourself, particularly people who have obviously done so much work to hear from your colleagues out there.

I've got four kids in the system. They're much younger than you are and are actually doing fine. I'm concerned that they continue to do okay. I have to tell you, from time to time when I hear the government tell me that the product we're producing, the student that we're graduating is mediocre or inferior somehow to other systems and other places, I wonder and I worry.

You're there and you will graduate in the not-toodistant future, I'm sure. What's your sense of the system as it now exists and the student that it's producing? Are they a mediocre or an inferior product, or is it your sense that what we're producing in Ontario will compete out there in the world in a way that will see us do as well as anybody else? How do you feel when the government says you're mediocre or inferior?

Ms Latha-Elliott: Apart from feeling personally insulted, because I am probably going to graduate soon, I think our system does a really good job at producing very well-rounded students. I worry about the back-to-basics movement because I don't think it prepares students for the world that lies ahead.

We hear a lot about the world that lies ahead and how complicated it is and the challenges that young people will face. I think with the kinds of things that are proposed not only in Bill 104 but in the secondary school reform package etc, we're really regressing quite drastically and I don't think we will be able to produce students who are able to think for themselves. My sense of the world out there is that you need to be able to think for yourself in order to survive, and all of the things that are considered to be out-of-classroom expenses are the things that have taught me to think for myself, like the anti-racist programs that I participated in, and the peer mentoring and the peer education, and the music and the library. All of those things that are now vulnerable to cuts have taught me to be analytical and critical. I think that will jeopardize our students.

The Acting Chair: Ms Latha-Elliott, thank you kindly for being with us here. I appreciate it.

## DEBORAH WHEELER

The Acting Chair: Ms Deborah Wheeler is next. Thank you for joining us this evening.

Ms Deborah Wheeler: If this presentation sounds very piecemeal, it's because I've had to put it together very hastily. I was called to speak to this committee barely 24 hours ago. I feel that these hearings can't be very fair because of their extremely limited time and the lack of advance notice as to booking appointments. Now that

I've registered my misgivings about the process, let me continue.

I have not come here today with facts and figures. I do not know enough about the financial aspects of education, although I certainly question the government's statistics regarding how much money is spent by school boards. The conflicting information the public is getting from the province and the school boards leaves a lot of room for doubt as to who is being more truthful with the people of Ontario.

I have come to speak from an East York perspective. I am a mother of three children in the East York public school system. My sons range from junior kindergarten to high school age. I have done volunteer work in one Toronto school and three East York schools. I have been particularly impressed with the East York system, which I find friendly, responsive and accountable.

As you may have heard before, East York has a small-town feeling in the midst of a big city. I find this carries over to the board of education. I often meet principals, teachers, caretakers, teaching assistants and trustees at a variety of East York functions, from political or school board meetings to events such as baseball, soccer and swimming lessons, or I even meet them in their unofficial roles of parents going to their own kids' Meet the Teacher Night.

I feel that over the years our families have got to know one another to a certain extent. I feel they know my family's needs and we can call on any one of them if need be. I also trust them. That is so very important in our society today. How could they hold their heads up at the baseball park or the local skating rink if they've been lying to the people they represent or if they haven't been accountable and fiscally responsible?

Each board in Metro has different priorities and distinct needs. Here in East York our student population has increased by 35.6% over the last 10 years. At the same time, we have endured massive cutbacks. How much more can we take and also keep quality education?

I cannot believe that a system which would have fewer school boards, fewer trustees, a system where one school board would be responsible for more than 300,000 pupils, could possibly be more accountable. Where is the logic in that?

Having had one child in a primary alternative school, the premise of such being active parent involvement in the classroom, I'm certainly an advocate for parental involvement. I've been very pleased to see an increasing demand for parental input coming from the Metro boards of education.

I myself have always done what I could to assist in the educating of my three children in whatever capacity I was able to, from helping kids in the classroom with reading, for instance, to driving on school trips, safe arrival, attending school meetings. But what I see in this bill is the provincial government trying to get free labour from dedicated and concerned parents instead of paying educated, trained and knowledgeable professionals, who are the appropriate people for the job. Even if this temporarily saved money, I believe the cost in chaos and disorganization would pretty quickly lead to much greater costs for our children and society in general.

One of my sons attends George Webster Public School. It is a school which has many demands made of it. We have a school population of over 600 students. Many of these children are recent immigrants to Canada. They and their parents do not speak English yet. Some have come from war-torn lands. Recently when I was walking down the hall of the school, I was concerned to see a little girl in the corridor crying. The teacher explained that the child recently came from a refugee camp and was having trouble with her peers because she was stealing from them. That little girl not only needed English-as-asecond-language classes but psychological help as well as the attention of some caring adults in her new life here in Canada.

We also have a high transient population of students whose families often live in very unappealing places. Many of these children come to school hungry or inadequately clothed. Some suffer from family violence. Judging from the number of fights in the playground that I see at recesses and the hostility and vulgarity of both the kids and their parents, I can tell you we must keep our level of special services to address the needs of these families. There should be more money available to the school systems in Metro, not less. Are you at the least going to guarantee present funding levels?

Some people malign teachers for having it too easy. They say they're paid too much, they have too many holidays. In my experience in East York, the teachers and other support staff, including principals, give much more of their time than that which they are actually paid for. Even with existing cutbacks, in a time when more and more is being demanded of them, they still take the time to address our personal concerns regarding our children.

Board employees, in my estimation, go above and beyond the call of duty in their services to parents, the community and last, but most importantly, to the students. But how far can we push them? These are not fictional superheroes. They are flesh and blood humans with their own lives, children and responsibilities. How dare we, the public, and you, the provincial government, expect them to do a superhuman job without the necessary financial supports?

We cannot turn the clock back. Society is very different now. Cultural norms and expectations have changed. We no longer have children who are seen and not heard. Difficult as this often is for parents and educators alike, we feel that the children are benefitting from being able to be contributing members of society.

Being the mother of three living in a rather small house, I cannot even imagine how a teacher could adequately meet the needs of, say, 40 students in a fairly small classroom or in an even smaller portable. We have a more hands-on approach to learning these days. There wouldn't even be room to move in such a crowded setting, let alone everyone having a turn at getting their hands on a project. How would teachers ever have sufficient time to deal with each individual child's academic and emotional needs and to discuss those needs with the potential of 80 parents at parent-teacher nights?

As a volunteer, I am very committed to following through on what I have taken on, but if my children were sick or something important came up, I certainly would

put aside my volunteer commitments if necessary. A school trustee needs to be paid as a sign from the community of the value we attach to the position and, furthermore, as an indication that our kids can't come second. Their needs are a priority for all those involved in their education.

I believe the East York trustees perform an essential task, and in my experience they have always been available, day or night, to talk with and to deal with problems. I have seen them at meetings at all hours and cannot believe they could actually be working part-time even though they earn only a part-time salary in East

To offer the new trustees, who will have around 100,000 constituents to represent, an honorarium of up to \$5,000 must be a joke. Who could give as much time as is required for only \$5,000 per year? Obviously, the candidate would have to have a separate full-time job. How would they juggle the needs of students and parents with the responsibilities due to their real employer? Whose needs would be met first? You can bet it would have to be the job which puts bread on their tables. This, quite simply, cannot be an unpaid position. Our children are too important to us and to the future of our country.

I am very concerned about the outsourcing of non-instructional services such as caretakers, secretaries, lunch supervisors and possibly even educational assistants. I think we all know that children find change very difficult to handle. Their worlds often seem confusing and mystifying to them. Their biggest needs are for security, routines and familiarity with structure and the people around them. In my experience with the school system, even if some teachers come and go, the support staff in the school usually remains the same over many years.

As we've read recently in the newspapers, there have been concerns over strangers in the schools. These situations could potentially become much more frequent in the future due to the hiring of contract workers. The support staff is very often drawn from the community, so they have more than an interest in earning a living and also care very much about the standards of the community in which they live. They are aware of any social problems or circumstances which exist. They are familiar with individual needs of the pupils. They have a vested interest in maintaining a safe, comfortable environment in which our kids can grow up in.

At our local grocery store, for example, my children often see one of George Webster's kindergarten teachers. Mrs Traynor is an institution of sorts herself because she not only has worked at the school for 12 years but she lives three blocks from the school. I truly believe that familiarity between school life and home life provides children with a level of comfort which assists their learning abilities at school. I would not feel that our children would as safe and well cared for if any of these services were contracted out to strangers who are not familiar with the needs of the children and the community.

I am fortunate to have had a first-born son who is now almost 16 who has never presented difficulties within the school system. He's one of the easy ones. He's done well at school, getting along with both peers and teachers, and he hasn't needed any special services such as remedial help, English-as-a-second-language classes, a social worker, French immersion, gifted classes — to my regret — or learning disabled classes, to my relief. But there are many other families who desperately need some of the aforementioned services, and we all deserve them. This is a public school system which has to meet all the needs of Ontario residents, regardless of their backgrounds and financial abilities.

To conclude, a unified Metro school board will become the fifth largest board in North America. How then will we be able to ascertain the needs of and meet various community standards? If this bill was about taking the best qualities of each of the boards and amalgamating them into one superior, manageable and yet humane board, I might as a parent feel I could endorse some of your recommendations. But I believe your real intentions are to bring our school system down to the lowest common denominator regarding costs, which cannot possibly meet individual needs.

These are such massive changes affecting so many lives. Let's make sure we don't waste any public money by rushing into something which appears to have no proof of being manageable and financially sound.

This government is giving itself, with the implementation of Bills 103 and 104, too much power. Control and power need to be spread out among many in a democracy to avoid corruption. I believe that those professional educators, who are trained and with much expertise in their field, are the best ones to make decisions affecting changes to the system and for the job of educating our children.

By the establishment of the Education Improvement Commission, you are making existing school boards, principals, teachers, trustees and thereby many parents into the enemy. This is insulting, alienating, non-productive and totally defeats the purpose of what you say you're trying to do, which is to improve the education system. Ask for our help. There is a lot of wisdom out here which you could use.

The Acting Chair: Would you please wind up, Ms Wheeler.

Ms Wheeler: How can you assure us that bigger school boards will be better? Where's the proof that you will be improving the existing system? To paraphrase Mayor Barbara Hall, slow down, take the extra time to do it right. Change your implementation date, please.

The Acting Chair: Ms Wheeler, thank you very much.

### MARTY CROWDER

The Acting Chair: I'd like to call Marty Crowder. Welcome to the committee.

Ms Marty Crowder: I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address this committee about Bill 104. I also want to tell you that I'm opposed to Bill 104. I debated with myself whether I should tell you this right away at the beginning, because I don't want you to stop listening. I thought I'd tell you that I'd put some really good stuff at the end, so it'll be worth your while to listen to the whole thing.

I'm speaking to you as an individual who has talked to many other parents about our concerns about what Bill 104 will mean to our children and their education. Right now we have locally elected school trustees, who in many cases reflect their constituencies. They are not just a bunch of suits; they are women and people of different cultures, sexual orientation and class backgrounds.

The school board in Toronto has been a leader in innovative programming for our students, and it has put money into these programs. How does the government plan to fund the education system in the future? Bill 104 takes away the local school board's ability to tax and administer its own budget. This will be handled by the provincial government through some unelected trustees, not only unelected but appointed by this government, this government which has been cutting services to the poor every chance it gets, it seems.

According to recent reports on the CBC, children are poorer than ever. This government has cut welfare payments, it has cut funding to social housing, it has cut services to the poor and closed beds in hospitals and is planning to close the hospitals themselves. Am I supposed to trust that the funding to my child's school will not be cut?

As well, the idea of increasing the size of the Metro board to 300,000 students is mind-boggling in its — I'd like to say "stupidity," but I don't want you to think that I think you're stupid. The separate school board is 100,000 students, and I've been told it is bordering on the unmanageable. You tell me how three times that size will work. What are the savings going to be? What are the costs to my child's education, and what are the benefits? Tell me. I want to know so that I can weigh the pros and cons myself. I don't want to take it on faith.

I am a parent of a child in grade 5 at our local school. At the school he attends, there are 27 languages spoken by the children attending and by their parents. There are already 30 children in his class. Fortunately he has an excellent teacher, who recognizes his intelligence and his abilities. He speaks English as a first language. He has had every advantage I have been able to provide. He comes from a home with books, music and athletic opportunities. If there are no extracurricular activities at the school, he will not suffer as badly as some children will. If there is not a library at the school or swimming or skating or choir or orchestra or ESL classes or programs for gay youth, he will survive without them. But I want him to have an enriched curriculum. Since he has to spend six and a half hours in school every day, I want him to be stimulated by different activities. I don't want him chained to a desk, as I was as a child.

Since I hear that the cleaning staff will be made redundant, I would hate to have us return to the days when a detention for unacceptable behaviour was served by cleaning windows or sweeping halls. He could even learn to hate school and, by extension, learning. Is that what we want to teach our children?

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There have already been cuts to his school. He hasn't always been in a class with 30 other students. There is an

always been in a class with 30 other students. There is an active parent council at his school. Before he attended this school, he went to an alternative school, and there

was even more parent involvement there. I am not afraid of getting involved, but I don't want to waste my time either.

Last year there was to be a staffing cut at the school he attends. The parent council struck a committee to look at the best way to absorb the reduced staffing. The committee consisted of parents, teachers and the principal. This committee met many times over several months and came up with a plan they were happy with. This plan had to be submitted to the board. When it came time to submit it, the principal included a minority report of his own. The bureaucrats at the board of education decided to ignore the report from the committee and implemented the minority report of one, the report from the principal. This was done while we had supportive and elected school trustees.

As I said earlier, I don't like to waste my time. I've heard that one of the proposals is that there will be a parents' council that will advise the new school board trustees. Pardon me for being sceptical. What do we really expect to get from elected trustees who get paid \$5,000 a year? Are they expected to live on that? Are they expected to find an extra five hours a week after they work full-time in order to eat and use that to run the largest school board in Canada?

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much. You've expressed some of the frustration that you can feel as a member of a parent council in dealing with the board that exists and the frustration —

Ms Crowder: With the bureaucrats.

Mrs McLeod: — with the bureaucrats, but with the elected board as part of that, I would assume. If that's not a correct interpretation of what you said, please correct me, because one of the things I'm wondering is what the frustration would be if elected boards ceased to exist altogether and whether you think there is really much chance that school boards can continue to exist when they're given a totally untenable situation, as the kind that is proposed under Bill 104.

Ms Crowder: I was almost afraid to put that anecdote in here, because I was afraid it would be understood as a criticism of the elected school board we have right now, and that is not what I intended. What I wanted to show there was that already we have problems with autocratic decision-making and we have an elected school board; when we lose that, we're going to lose all opportunity for participation, I'm afraid. I think what's being set up is a sham; that these appointees who are going to be running things are not going to listen to parent councils and they aren't going to listen to the people we elect. I'm not sure who would even run, who's going to be able to run. I can't think of people who can afford to give the time that

will be required to do this for \$5,000 a year.

Mr Martin: Thank you for coming and for making the points that you did. It seems to me that inherent in this bill is a slap at everybody in the system: trustees, teachers, parents and most particularly students. You described a situation where a student, losing all of those things that make school fun and enjoyable and attractive, gives up. We have a government today that's telling us and telling students that in fact they're mediocre, they're inferior, they're not quite what they should be, because

the system is failing them. I'm wondering what impact that in itself will or could have on your son and on others in the system now as it exists and if in fact from that it's your experience with your son and his fellow students that they are in any way mediocre or inferior to any other systems you know of.

Ms Crowder: I certainly don't find the existing school system mediocre compared to what I was brought up in. My son does not seem to suffer from a fear or a lack of self-esteem. I'm not sure that that's all been provided by the school system, but he has had a series of excellent teachers over the years. Certainly the years he spent in the alternative school did a lot to help him to learn to learn, as opposed to learn the basics. He learned to love learning. He learned how to do it himself. I think that's what the important thing is. I think so often you want to teach kids the three Rs by a variety of rote methods; that used to be the way to do it. It's much more important, in my opinion, that a child learn to love learning and they can do it themselves when the need arises.

Mr Froese: Thank you very much for coming. All of us are concerned about our children and education, and sometimes on the government side we sit here and we think that critics of what we're proposing to do feel that we're not concerned about children. I have four children. They're in high school and elementary school. We are concerned.

We've heard from across the province and from my riding specifically in these hearings that the present school board system and the trustees are not making decisions the correct way as far as spending funds are concerned, that they're going to school board offices, and some have mentioned Taj Mahals and so on and so forth. They have been concerned over the years that the funds haven't been going to the classroom. The funds should be going to the student and the teacher.

In that light, if there are less school boards and less school board trustees, how will that affect that teacher and student in the classroom? I'd like to have an answer. How is that going to affect that relationship we're all talking about, that the funds should be going to the classroom? If we have a reduction in school boards and in trustees, could you explain to me how that's going to affect that relationship.

Ms Crowder: You're saying you're going to put all the money that's being saved by reducing the school boards directly into the classroom? That's what you're telling me? Is that what your plan is?

**Mr Froese:** I asked you how doing that is going to affect it. It's quite possible that could happen, yes.

Ms Crowder: I'm sorry that you don't understand what the school boards actually do. My understanding of what the school boards do is that they spend a fair bit of time looking at curricula, trying to figure out ways to improve the school system. That's what we elect them for. In Toronto, certainly one of the things I've been really impressed with is the support they've given to gay children in the schools, the gay-positive high schools. As a parent, and knowing what the statistics are of youth and gay youth suicide, I think that's been essential. We aren't going to get that from an individual school if there's no progressive leadership, and that's what I expect the school boards to provide.

The Acting Chair: Ms Crowder, thank you kindly for being with us this evening and sharing your views. We appreciate it.

#### DAVID CHECKLAND

The Acting Chair: Our final witness this evening is Mr David Checkland. Mr Checkland, welcome to the committee.

Mr David Checkland: I've lived in Toronto and Ontario for 12 years, and I'm a parent of two school-age children. I teach at Ryerson Polytechnic University in Toronto. While I'm no great fan of some of the things that are happening in the current education system, I am here to oppose the passage of Bill 104.

I'd also like to say to those of you who are concerned with indications of quality that some of the typos in the document I've presented you are a result of having very little time to prepare this and the fact that I have the flu today, so I was overly reliant on my spellchecker.

They're not, I hope, an indication of quality.

Bill 104 establishes a body, the Education Improvement Commission, that is not elected nor established as the result of extensive public consultation and discussion. It gives this body wide-ranging powers, including powers over duly elected officials. Such powers can be justified as an administrative necessity, as the government has suggested, and as a protection of the public interest against possible irresponsible misuse of public trust, but only, I put it to you, in a situation where there are three conditions met: (1) that this is a quite temporary expedient to reform; (2) that the substance of the reforms has been announced, including general principles that will guide the transitional body in its actions; and (3) that the content and implications of the reforms have been a matter of public discussion and have involved public consultation.

Condition (1) is not really met by this legislation, but you could argue perhaps that it is, but the other two are clearly not. Hence, however well-intentioned, and I'm unsure about that, the legislation amounts to undemocratic overkill. Why such sweeping powers? Why no possibility of legal challenges? Where is the accountability in the education system through these means? 2150

The conditions I have stated for justifying such extraordinary powers are not simply drawn from my personal preferences; in law, in democratic theory and in the traditions of this province and this country, they represent widely acknowledged essential elements of the democratic use of power, and they've been ignored.

Since I am sure the committee members have heard this before, I'd like to raise a related but perhaps less-remarked-upon issue, surprised as I am to find myself as the last witness. Maybe it's worth bringing this up. The government has spoken of the need to reduce the number of politicians in Ontario and to create more efficient and cost-effective public systems of governance. A good part of what is being contended in these hearings, and the Bill 103 hearings, I believe, is the question of the right place to locate and the right way to think about the value of efficiency.

Bill 104 neither includes nor is preceded by any substantive vision of what it would be to improve education in Ontario. This would require reflection on the multiple purposes of education, the rationale behind its public financing and some account of why certain purposes matter more than others. Against such a background, the idea of creating systems, which are really means to achieve certain ends, and the idea of making them efficient makes sense. But without such a background — which is the current situation, or if it's not, it's not known to be the current situation, because we don't know what the background position is — efficiency or cost-effectiveness has no real, clear meaning.

It begins to look like efficiency has become the goal rather than the means. The public, though not of one mind on this issue, is generally clear that it wants effective education, where students learn well and resources are not squandered. Concerns about overall cost arise only when that goal is perceived as not being well-achieved. When it comes to the ends of education, this government hasn't really proposed a guiding vision.

With respect to efficiency, if I might comment on several things in Bill 104, under the function of the Education Improvement Commission, they're explicitly instructed to examine savings with outsourcing, but they're not instructed to examine other alternatives for saving money or the wider effects of that outsourcing. That's a misplaced notion of efficiency. The idea that fewer school boards will necessarily be more efficient: It would be nice to have some studies that showed or gave some credence to what the optimal size of school boards ought to be. None of that has been offered to the public in support of this bill.

The extent to which the current school board system is effectively democratic or ensures quality education is in doubt. There are concerns. There's evidence both ways. I'm particularly concerned about a lot of the anecdotal evidence about reading skills. My son's experience in grades 1 and 2 has me concerned about how well and

effectively reading is sometimes taught.

It seems to me that one of the issues that's not being addressed by Bill 104 and is not seriously discussed by the government, and ought to be, is the issue of class size. Probably the single biggest reform to the system you could make that would make a difference in quality of education is the reduction of class size, giving the teacher

and the student more time together.

How will Bill 104, which is essentially wholly administrative in its outlook and doesn't mention any of the issues I've raised, lead to improvement? In effect, school board members will have their effective power reduced, because such power involves their time and, yes, therefore sometimes public subsidy of their time. Even if having fewer boards opens up in some sense the possibility for effective reforms at the level of learning — and I'm not sure I see how it does, but perhaps it does — denying those elected resources for the use of their time will guarantee that many opportunities for serious reform are lost.

Correspondingly, citizens will find it harder to have a voice which can effectively raise policy concerns. Hence, authority on most matters will devolve either to the provincial ministry or to non-elected staff of school boards, both of which would be unfortunate or undemocratic. It's an irony of contemporary Canadian politics that the very governments that are keen to decentralize the federal authorities are very unkeen about decentralizing their own authorities.

The final thing I'd like to mention is the issue of taxation reforms, which are not explicitly limited to Bill 104, especially the shifting of education off of the property tax and many other services on to the property tax. Education is essential for opportunity in today's world, and publicly financed, good education is probably the single most important thing, though far from the only thing, we can do to create, and not merely pay lip-service to, equality of opportunity for our children. The other aspects of tax reform will all operate against equality of opportunity, especially the offloading of services such as welfare on to the property tax. They will create drastic differences between jurisdictions in this province over the long run, incapacity to offer those services, and probably in terms of economic spinoff effects on those areas. The whole package needs to be rethought; it's not just a question of Bill 104 or Bill 103.

My advice to the government, through this committee, is that rather than view such rethinking and consultation as a defeat, as something that's being directly contended over, the government has a rare opportunity to show genuine leadership when it comes to the public good. The current debates aren't merely fighting between interest groups; rather, they're expressions of concern about the nature of the public good.

Democracy matters not simply because it's fair, but also because it can, at its best, involve many people, as they think about issues, in a process of not just contending for what they've already made up their minds they want but giving reasons and understanding the viewpoints of others and changing their own viewpoints. There is an opportunity to do that with this package. It raises such fundamental questions. That's the fundamental value at stake with Bill 104, and that's why its procedures are passing up an important opportunity. I urge you: Don't ignore the current dissent, don't bulldoze over it; listen, consult, tap into it, and better things can emerge.

The Acting Chair: Thank you very much. You have about a minute each.

Mr Skarica: You said there were some things in the education system that needed to be reformed or improved. Can you give us some examples?

Mr Checkland: As I say, I'm concerned about some of the methods of teaching reading. It's not just my son but some of his friends. I'm concerned about that, but I think class size plays a role in that. I'm concerned about some of the more local things. I'm a major opponent of the Toronto policy of all grades being split grades. I think that weakens instruction. I understand the theory. The theory is a good idea, but it doesn't translate into the real world. Those are two examples, but those are the kinds of things that I don't see Bill 104 seriously addressing.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate your emphasis on the need for evidence. One of the things I'm hoping my colleagues on the committee will do is look at the five studies,

which, to the best of my knowledge, are the only ones that have been done on amalgamation in the past four years. Just for the record, one of them said that ideally boards should be 5,000 to 55,000 students. One said that with anything larger than 6,000 students you should probably look at subdividing it. Two of them said there are no efficiencies to be found in amalgamation. One said that in fact it's the wrong priority because it uses the energy and resources inappropriately.

The other study I would like to see brought to bear is a statement that is made in the Ernst and Young report that was commissioned by the government in order to look at spending on education. The statement that was made in that report is that size is not relevant in determining what boards will spend more than others and that the ministry needs to get a greater understanding of what in fact drives education spending up and what's beyond a board's control, like special needs students.

My question is, do you not think it would be a good idea for the ministry to understand what makes school board costs go up before they decide what to cut?

Mr Checkland: What can one say but yes to that? But it's probably contentious; not all of that is completely clear-cut. But I hope those studies are taken seriously. Instead of dealing with cuts to the system, consider funding better studies to better evaluate what the outcomes are.

Mr Martin: I want to thank you for coming and making what I considered to be a very good presentation. We've heard a number of people over the course of today come before us, and whether they were for or against Bill 104, they were certainly in unison about wanting to improve education. I think that's what everybody wants to do. There isn't anybody here who doesn't want to do that. Overwhelmingly, the majority were of the opinion that Bill 104, as you have suggested, does not do that, does not deal with that question; it deals more with efficiency and cost-effectiveness. More than anything and I keep repeating this because I think it's really important that it be said - the basis upon which this legislation is coming forward is a question of our system being mediocre or inferior or not doing the job. You're a professor at Ryerson. What's your feeling on that subject?

Mr Checkland: I don't really know. There are two things you have to keep in mind. Many people in the universities complain that students aren't as literate as they used to be. That might be true; I haven't taught long enough to know. I certainly haven't noticed a deterioration over the eight years I've been teaching full-time. But if it's true, it might be a function not so much of the school system but of broader social factors, one of which is that far more people go to post-secondary education than used to. So the people who are in post-secondary education might be different, but that doesn't reflect a general decrease in literacy in the wider culture.

That's why we need serious studies that can measure different kinds of qualitative outcomes rather than just anecdotal impressions. Certainly my anecdotal impression is that the system at worst is mediocre, and mediocre isn't bad.

The Acting Chair: Mr Checkland, let me thank you very much for coming here and sharing your views with us. We appreciate that very much.

Interruption.

The Acting Chair: Can I please ask for order or I'll ask you to leave the room. I'm sorry. The committee is not completed yet. Mrs McLeod, you had a question?

Mrs McLeod: I do, actually, and maybe it's appropriate. Before the committee reconvenes to have hearings on the road, there will be a summary of the last two days' hearings. I'm still reeling a bit from the reinterpretation of some of the evidence that's been given by the committee and the rather stark acknowledgement by the government that the reason we have Bill 104 is because of excess spending on the part of school trustees. I would therefore like to request, in the summation of the evidence before the committee, the percentage of presenters who have addressed the issue of overspending by trustees versus the percentage of presenters who have described the value of the trustees to them as parents or in other ways.

The Acting Chair: Is this a question to the research team?

Mrs McLeod: Yes, it is.

The Acting Chair: Do you need that in writing? Mr Ted Glenn: I've got it.

**Interjection:** Mr Chair, I understand there was one person today who was not present to make a speech or to speak to the committee.

The Acting Chair: Yes, that's correct.

**Interjection:** I wonder if it's reasonable for me to ask to take that person's place right now.

The Acting Chair: The problem is that many other people asked.

**Interjection:** That's all right. It doesn't matter. You are here to listen to the people.

The Acting Chair: Yes, I agree.

**Interjection:** Okay, then, would you please do that? I am just taking the place of one person who is absent.

The Acting Chair: Please, you're out of order, ma'am. I'm going to give you the explanation of what it is. The committee sends out information — actually it goes by way of the Legislature — requesting people to apply to be heard.

Interjection: I did apply.

The Acting Chair: I know, I know. We can't accommodate all, because there are limited days given.

Interruption.

The Acting Chair: If you're not going to listen, then I'll adjourn the meeting right away. I'm sorry we can't hear you. We can't set the precedent. I'm very sorry. This committee is adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 2205.

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Mr Morley Kells (Etobicoke-Lakeshore PC)

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre / -Centre L)

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North / -Nord PC)

### Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie ND)

Clerk / Greffière: Ms Tonia Grannum

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# Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Monday 17 March 1997

Standing committee on social development

Fewer School Boards Act, 1997

# Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36e législature

## Journal des débats (Hansard)

Lundi 17 mars 1997

Comité permanent des affaires sociales

Loi de 1997 réduisant le nombre de conseils scolaires



Chair: Annamarie Castrilli Clerk: Tonia Grannum Présidente : Annamarie Castrilli Greffière : Tonia Grannum

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### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Monday 17 March 1997

### ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

### COMITÉ PERMANENT DES AFFAIRES SOCIALES

Lundi 17 mars 1997

The committee met at 1032 in the Delta Ottawa Hotel, Ottawa.

# FEWER SCHOOL BOARDS ACT, 1997 LOI DE 1997 RÉDUISANT LE NOMBRE DE CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Consideration of Bill 104, An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system. providing for certain matters related to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 104, Loi visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte, l'efficacité et la qualité du système scolaire ontarien en permettant la réduction du nombre des conseils scolaires, en créant la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation, chargée d'encadrer la transition vers le nouveau système, en prévoyant certaines questions liées aux élections de 1997 et en apportant d'autres améliorations à la Loi sur l'éducation et à la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.

The Chair (Ms Annamarie Castrilli): Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to our hearings here in Ottawa on St Patrick's Day. We're delighted to have you all here. I'd like to proceed very promptly. As you know, time is very

limited in this fair city, as elsewhere.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): Just prior to the beginning of the hearings, this is our first hearing on the road outside of Toronto, and I want to put on record my continuing concern, as the whip for the Liberal caucus on the committee, about the limited time we have in Ottawa and in every other city we're going to be visiting.

You will know, Madam Chair, that once again we face a situation where only a small number of those who wanted to make presentations to the committee can be heard. In my view, only a very small number of those who will be directly affected by the implementation of Bill 104 are going to be given a chance to make a presentation. Their opportunity to make a presentation will be very brief. I cannot go without putting on the record my continued distress that with a bill of this magnitude we are so limited in allowing people an opportunity to be heard.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On behalf of our caucus, I again express my desire and concern that the Conservative majority on the committee chose to vote against the motion I put to extend the hearings so that more of the presenters who had wished to make presentations would be able to participate. I hope that if there is

as much interest as I expect there is here in Ottawa, the Conservative members will themselves move a motion asking the House leaders to extend the hearings.

Having said that, I also ask if we could be provided with maps of the proposed new boundaries for the district boards in eastern Ontario for the purposes of our hearings today, so that if there are questions around the specific boundaries that are proposed if Bill 104 passes, we will be able to refer to them and know what presenters are speaking about specifically. So I hope each of us can be provided with the proposed maps in eastern Ontario.

The Chair: Mr Wildman, we have copies here from the parliamentary assistant. We'll be photocopying them

and distributing them.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): We already provided you with copies of those, Mr Wildman.

Mr Wildman: I know. It's just that we don't have them here.

### NEPEAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Chair: I ask the Nepean Chamber of Commerce to come forward, please. Mr Wilson, welcome to our committee. I would ask you to introduce your copresenter. You have 15 minutes to make your presentation, and if time permits the committee will ask you some questions.

Mr Bob Wilson: With me is Roger Fraser, who is chair of our government affairs committee within the chamber. My name is Bob Wilson and I'm chair of the Nepean chamber. Ours is going to be sort of a generalized approach to the concepts in the bill, with some specific suggestions.

The Nepean Chamber of Commerce, on behalf of business in the city of Nepean, thanks you for this opportunity. Prior to the presentation, though, I want the committee to be aware of the personal background and prospectus I bring to these hearings and this presentation. Some considered my background a liability to this presentation, some as biased and some as a conflict of interest, and many as what needs to be said.

As a small business owner, former negotiator and also president of a major teachers' union in Ontario, a trainer of teacher negotiators throughout this province and a teacher for 27 years, I bring extensive hands-on experience on both sides of the issues, stated or implied, in Bill 104. I also bring a background from the federal public

sector as an economic analyst prior to all that.

We're not here as the Nepean Chamber of Commerce to bash teachers. That's been an easy and much too popular activity of late and we will not be part of that process. We have many superb teachers in Ontario. It's been my privilege to know a great many of those excellent individuals, and they are up to the challenge of the new realities, given the chance. We are here to offer suggestions in regard to changing the educational governance system in Ontario, and to other issues which are inherent in the provisions of Bill 104.

The Nepean Chamber of Commerce supports the concepts of Bill 104. In terms of its intent to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system, the bill goes a long way to accomplishing its purpose. Our specific concerns and suggestions in regard to the provisions of the bill will be addressed later

in this presentation.

The Nepean Chamber of Commerce believes it's well beyond the time to overhaul, drastically, the education system in Ontario, not only in terms of the number of school boards and their contingent administration costs but also in terms of the total costs of education, curriculum, student achievement, the provisions for teacher collective bargaining and the methods by which the taxpayers of Ontario foot the bill. The structure of educational governance must change in this province. There is no choice, in our view.

As someone who has left the teaching profession and started a business, and as chair of the Nepean Chamber of Commerce, I understand and reflect the feelings of the Nepean business community towards the current status of

educational governance in this province.

To the naysayers in regard to the bill's provisions, stated and implied, we believe it's time those persons or groups take a realistic look at the actual productivity and output of our current education system, especially in relation to what our schools currently provide our students in terms of their international competitors, and what we must create and deliver to our future entrepreneurs, those individuals who, educated and provided with realistic, measurable, internationally recognized skill sets that reflect the requirements of the new global economy, will determine the economic viability of Canada in the new millennium, and all of that within a context of what we can continue to afford.

That personal reality check must be administered with a hard-nosed, genuine grasp of the realities of what our students face in the new global economy, a check that's free of self-indulgence and wish lists, but with a concern that all students, regardless of ability, must be included in the new governance structure. Bottom line: A new standard of excellence must be instituted and required from our system's education programs and graduates, all within the confines of the new global economic and competitive realities. That's the hard-nosed business plan that must be developed and instituted for Ontario's education system.

Business has a strong voice in the outcomes, contrary to what unions and other activist groups would like you to believe. Without business there are no jobs; without jobs there are no communities, no people, children, schools and no taxes. The economic engine would have no wheels. That's just a fact. Think of what it would be like if business didn't exist. All of you appearing here as government representatives wouldn't be present, and that's a fact.

In Nepean, business taxes provide approximately 37% of the overall realty tax funding to the Carleton Board of Education, a not insignificant amount. Business is, and must continue to be, a major funding and conceptual contributor to education, not only in terms of the taxes on business itself but in terms of employees who pay personal property taxes on homes owned, and to the content of a standardized curriculum for students. Students, and current job seekers in this province, still suffer from the application or misapplication of educational concepts imposed in the Hall-Dennis report.

Business is also the prime user of the product of education, the skill sets, or lack thereof, of the graduates. It has an inherent right, as any investor, to determine the return on its investment and the right to determine the cost of the infrastructure that creates the return.

The chamber realizes that student achievement is not a specific provision in Bill 104, but realistically — and parenthetically, hopefully — that will be an outcome of the restructuring. Graduates of our school system in Ontario are not given much beyond a passing grade in national and international comparisons of their achievement levels. The perception, and the reality, of those evaluations must be changed on both the national and international scenes, and that won't happen until there is a real, measurable and accountable restructuring of the education system in the province.

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When 2,000 high-tech jobs go begging in this region because of a lack of qualified individuals, something is wrong somewhere, and that's a fact. The problem has to be fixed. Academia must be able to re-engineer and react to global economic labour force realities as fast as business must, to ensure the survival of its students and itself.

Perhaps it's time to shake up the total spectrum of education in Ontario and examine the possibility of a high-tech, degree-granting university in this area, created, controlled and funded by private industry with curriculum and standards determined and taught by teachers from the local high-tech sector. Can you imagine the impeuts that would be generated to improve the standards in the public elementary and high school sectors? What a marvellous opportunity. Dare we grasp it?

A recent survey of our Nepean chamber's membership indicated that 83% of the businesses surveyed approved reducing the number of school boards to less than half of the current numbers, and 81.5% approved a provincial reduction in the number of school board trustees to one third of the current levels; 70% of the respondents agreed with removing education costs from the property tax bill.

Recent reports in the print media suggest, however, that the original intent of removing the cost of education from property tax may be changed. If there is any truth to those reports, it's too bad. The province must regain and retain control of local boards of education.

Neither business nor its property taxpayer adjuncts have had a genuine say in the costs and the outcomes of education. When individual companies, all contributors to the education company bill, are faced with a fait accompli budget presented to a municipal government simply

for payment, there is no real representation. Boards of education would like us to think differently.

For too long — to borrow a phrase — we've had taxation without representation. Of course boards of education will argue that they are our elected representatives, and that is true in the sense that we cast our votes, but not in the sense that boards of education truly are accountable to our views. Can you imagine a business continuing to exist with some of the budget decisions that have been made by some boards of education? Trustees can't be removed in the same manner as company directors; perhaps they should be.

The current structure of educational governance in Ontario provides boards of education with the opportunity to impose this taxation without representation. Do we need another tea party? Perhaps it's time to have education budgets approved by the municipal governments

involved in setting the taxation levels.

General concepts: In terms of the overall restructuring and reduction of the number of school boards, Bill 104 is bang on in the Nepean chamber's concept, and I refer again to the results of our member survey.

The introductory paragraph on the cover page of the bill accomplishes in general terms the concepts of the

bill.

We do believe, however, that it should include a very specific provision for the establishment of charter schools. Regardless of the permissive aspect for the creation of these schools under present legislation, they need to have legislative legitimacy. They reflect parent wishes and, as such, they can serve to establish competitive standards and curricula for other public schools.

In terms of article 8 in the bill, we agree with the establishment of the Education Improvement Commission. In the amalgamation process, there must be control of expenditures, transfer-circumventing of financial obligations of the current boards of education. But we do

have some specific suggestions.

We believe there should be a system established that ensures the deliberations, actions and regulations of the Education Improvement Commission are transparent and accountable to the public. With its almost carte blanche terms of reference, it's important that the public know what's going on at all times, especially with a non-elected group of individuals.

Develop specific guidelines for the commission to achieve the transition to the new system of education

governance in Ontario.

Develop specific, detailed guidelines and expectations for all the activities of the commission and its committees.

Create a provision that does not automatically repeal sections 334 to 343 of Bill 104 as of December 31, 2000, but allows for the continuance of an education standards commission or similar provincial level body to control, in the broadest sense, education in Ontario.

Part of the basis for these suggestions arises from the situation in this area. One of the English-language boards to be amalgamated seems to be getting on with the job. The other board, however, seems unable to generate, to this point that I'm aware, even a quorum of trustees to approve its 1997 budget. That is a process covered under

the terms of reference of the Education Improvement Commission, yet there have been no public reports as to what the Education Improvement Commission is doing or is prepared to do to remedy that.

When a majority of the public supports the government's proposed changes to educational governance, don't allow a cloud cover to be created over ongoing deliberations, or lack thereof, between the commission and a board of education. Perception, as you well know, is everything.

There are two other issues that are arising, inherent in the application of Bill 104, that need to be addressed by

the Education Improvement Commission:

In very general terms, the two English-language public boards of education to be amalgamated in this area are very different, partly due to demographics, partly due to administration philosophies which may be the result of one board having the ability to fund its programs without provincial grants.

We believe that special attention must be given not only to the physical amalgamation challenges, but to the amalgamation of the differing philosophies. The senior administrative staff amalgamation will present some unique problems, as well as the amalgamation of the teaching, administrative and school support staffs. A process must be established that communicates the issues and outcomes to the public.

The other major issue is of course the generation of the new teacher, CUPE and other union contracts. Having experienced an amalgamation of teacher unions, the lowest common denominator is never the norm. If education costs are to be contained, the situation must be dealt with. The Nepean Chamber of Commerce believes a number of options must be considered to resolve potential and threatened labour unrest, and the government must take a stand.

In the case of the teacher union contracts, we don't believe that simply letting the unions negotiate a melded contract is the answer. There are two options in our opinion:

One is alter the terms of Bill 100, the School Boards and Teachers Collective Negotiations Act, to amend curent provisions in regard to the right to strike and the right to negotiate all working conditions; or consider legislation that would create Ontario as a right-to-work province.

There is much evidence from studies done by the Fraser Institute to indicate that the latter suggestion substantially increases productivity in all the countries and states studied. The provision would also allow the issue of new CUPE contracts to be resolved. Unions can continue to exist; employees just don't have to join and have dues deducted in terms of the Rand formula.

Employees who may be reluctant to speak out about union and contract issues, or do not wish to participate in union sanctions because of possible repercussions, would be free to do so. The situation where a non-union employee benefits from a union negotiated contract can be resolved; it's not an enormous or insurmountable problem

The Nepean chamber also realizes that if the government chooses either suggestion, it will create at least union animosity, but we strongly believe, and are prepared to support, one of the choices as essential to the long-range health of the education system in Ontario.

The chamber further recognizes that this latter issue has a broader labour context than as applies to the education system. It is one we are prepared to discuss further with government representatives in a different

These issues are inherent in the application of Bill 104 and they must be publicly recognized and addressed.

Thank you for your time and attention to this presentation. I'm prepared to answer questions here if you have

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Wilson and Mr Fraser. You've successfully used up all your time and thank you for your comments.

#### CARLETON BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: The Carleton Board of Education, Ms MacGregor. Thank you very much for being here. I would ask you to present your co-presenter for the record.

Ms Ann MacGregor: I'd like to introduce Kyle Murray who is our director of education and is here to respond to questions, assuming we have an opportunity to have some.

I come this morning with a sense of urgency and frustration: urgency because with less than 10 months left in our mandate, a new amalgamated board must be planned for establishment on January 1, 1998; frustration because we do not have all the tools to accomplish this Herculean task.

We recognize that defining the jurisdictions of boards of education is a provincial prerogative. We have stated that we are ready and willing to work towards the establishment of a new Ottawa-Carleton district school board, as long as it does not jeopardize our 45,000 students' interests. But the Carleton Board of Education has problems with Bill 104, both with what it includes and with what it does not include; that is, vital information is necessary before we can move forward. 1050

Therefore, a number of questions have to be answered

(1) When will we receive the essential pieces of the puzzle needed to effect a smooth transition?

We believe it is impossible to assess the effects of this bill until all of the pieces of the puzzle are in place. Despite the government's promise in January that the funding formula for the new boards and the response to the Paroian report regarding collective bargaining would be made before now, there has been silence on these important matters.

The only piece of the puzzle we have so far is Bill 104. The bill does not provide us with the means or the knowledge to plan for the transition to a new district school board. This bill neither protects our students' interests nor provides for the necessary transition funding for startup costs for such a merger. We believe it violates our trust vis-à-vis our students.

Provincial fact-finder Brian Bourns estimated in 1993 that the one-time cost of amalgamating the Carleton and Ottawa boards of education would be between \$3.5 million and \$6 million, assuming — and these are major assumptions - that provincial funding to the new amalgamated board was not lower than the existing funding, that legislation was implemented to ensure labour costs would not be increased, and that a five-year window was given to the amalgamated board to introduce any shifts in program approach required.

There is no indication so far that the province will provide the transition funding, the stability in labour costs, or the needed time for transition. We urge you to ensure that Bill 104 is amended to include such provisions for the sake of students everywhere in this prov-

(2) How can we carry out our mandate as duly elected trustees if the powers proposed in Bill 104 are delegated to a non-elected Education Improvement Commission?

We urge you to reconsider legislation that would allow the government to delegate unfettered powers to the EIC. These powers would impinge on the responsibilities trustees were elected to fulfil.

We would remind you that we have done nothing wrong. We are insulted by the implication that we might fail to continue to act responsibly in the best interests of all our stakeholders - students, staff, parents, and ratepayers — during the transition period. We urge that this bill be amended to include provisions to ensure that the non-elected, appointed members of the EIC act in a way that is fair and equitable to all existing school boards in their local communities.

(3) How can we prepare for transition without knowl-

edge of our resources?

The provisions of this bill do not provide for an orderly, democratic transition to a new district school board. It does not specify the constraints we will be under when changes are made to the funding of education in this province. Government by rumour and insinuation is a threat to democracy.

We are especially fearful of the minister's statement, reported in the Ottawa Sun on Friday, March 7, that if the Ottawa Board of Education does not remit to the province \$31 million in local taxes, in accordance with provincial legislation passed last year that would "permit" the OBE to do so, Mr Snobelen will consider holding back funds from the new district school board when the

province takes over education costs.

We are shocked by the minister's threat. Such a move would be patently unfair and injurious to our students. We have already fulfilled our obligations to make budget reductions to meet reduced funding levels. It is imperative that action be taken to resolve the \$31-million issue and that it not become a financial burden for a new district school board in January 1998. Although it is not our position to support whether the province should require payment or should opt to forgive repayment by the Ottawa board, this issue must be settled between the two parties one way or another by 1997 if amalgamation is to occur in 1998. We are absolutely adamant that the \$31-million burden not impact on our Carleton students and constituents, either now or in future.

Another area of concern is capital for new facilities. The Carleton Board of Education has confirmed its intent to proceed with the construction of much-needed new school facilities. While we welcome the approval to proceed, it is unclear how we or other school boards will be able to commit to projects which require funding beyond the provincial allocation. We need to know whether the per pupil grant for 1998 and beyond will include, for school boards in recent and continued enrolment growth, a component for capital expenditures which will compensate for the announced removal under the education reforms of the board's right to tax locally. We need the government's assurance that the province will absorb, through added grants, the share of new capital construction costs that has been formerly funded locally.

(4) How will local accountability be maintained if this

legislation is passed?

The spectre of total provincial control over education is alarming. Bill 104 appears to be the preamble to changes in the way education is funded. The minister has stated that the province will control all education finance and that school boards will no longer raise residential property taxes to pay for a share of education costs.

We believe that Bill 104 must be amended to give district school boards the right to levy taxes locally. It is vital to be financially accountable to our constituents and to be politically responsive to local circumstances. A very large board of 80,000 students will inevitably be more remote from its stakeholders than our two existing boards. If Bill 104 is passed without an amendment stipulating the right to levy taxes locally, the amalgamated district school board will be distributing funds funnelled through its hands, but over which it has no fiscal control. This is remoteness carried to an extreme, which will surely not serve our communities well.

As for provincial accountability, trustees will represent huge areas and numbers of constituents compared to those which they now work so hard to represent and to understand. We challenge you, honourable members of this standing committee, to recommend to the government an amendment to Bill 104 which will provide for an element of local control and of local responsibility for the education of our students.

(5) We ask you to recommend amendments to Bill 104 that reduce uncertainty and allow existing boards to work

effectively through the transition phase.

The uncertainties created by the proposed reforms contained in this bill and the government's other, as yet unrevealed, educational reform measures are paralysing school boards. We look to this committee to ensure that Bill 104 is amended to provide the means to effect reforms in Ontario fairly and efficiently so that we can get on with the business of education. If this bill is not amended substantially and accompanied by additional detailed information and provisions, instability and chaos will ensue. Sweeping reforms cannot simply be legislated.

Above all, we would ask you to recommend adequate time for meaningful consultation with those who have to implement the plan at the local level. We ask you to give us a sensible plan, reasonable time lines, the necessary resources to do our job, and the chance to provide input

to the provincial government. Further, we recommend a one-year delay in passing the Fewer School Boards Act.

We ask you for specific amendments to clauses in Bill 104. To save time this morning, I am submitting a more detailed summary of our rationale in our written submissions and will simply list for you the following requests for amendments.

(6) We ask you for a clarifying amendment regarding the number of trustees that will be permitted under the legislation and for a provision allowing local input in this

matter.

(7) We submit that the subclauses of section 326(6), which provide for the establishment of electoral zones, require amendment to allow parts of one municipality to be added to another for school board purposes.

(8) We urge you to consult with both local school councils and school boards before passing into law subsection 335(2), which stipulates that the Education Improvement Commission is to strengthen the advisory role of school councils and increase parental involvement in education governance. We have no evidence that the majority of parents wish to govern education.

We are at an important crossroads in the history of education in Ontario. There will be no turning back if the education system that emerges from the government's proposed reform fails to improve substantially on the present one. No less than the future of the students of this province is at stake. I trust you share our feelings of urgency and frustration and will review carefully my submission on behalf of the Carleton Board of Education. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms MacGregor. We have one minute left per caucus.

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Mr Skarica: You gave an excellent presentation. Thank you very much. If I could take you to page 3, you indicate that you've already fulfilled your obligation to make budget reductions, and I understand that you're already spending 30% less than the adjoining board. How were you able to do that? How were you able to cope with the reductions and how were you able to cope with

the fact that you spend 30% less?

Ms MacGregor: Very painfully and with great difficulty. I think it's been indicated that, for instance, there are programs that we no longer offer that other boards do. We no longer have junior kindergarten and we offer full-day alternate day kindergarten rather than half-day every day, which cuts down on the busing. We have made major cuts to transportation in our area, and our area is a mixed one: We have both rural and densely populated areas. We have also cooperated with the Carleton Separate School Board in the area of transportation to make economies in that area. So there are many places where we attempted and succeeded in economies, and some of them impacted on program; that's the long and the short of it.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate your presentation and, as well, your recognition that the funding cuts you've had to make have been painful. I guess that's what I would like to ask you to address, is the impact of these changes on students. I think you correctly associate the changes in

school board restructuring with the changes in funding that are coming.

You've also made the point — you just touch on it — of resulting extra costs of the school board amalgamation. That's certainly a concern that was raised even by the government's consultants, Ernst and Young, when they said that the amalgamation of boards could actually lead to an increased cost. You've expressed your concern that the government guarantee the funding for that and I think you're right not to be reassured. Every indication is the government wants to cut costs, not to see them increase. I guess what I'd ask you is, do you see any way in which this amalgamation is going to free up dollars for students in a classroom?

Ms MacGregor: It certainly in the short term is going to be costly. In the long term, there is a possibility that it may free up some small amount of money by reducing the number of staff in the administrative area, but we already are down to the bare bones in administrative staff and that's another one of the difficulties. We are in a period where, if this goes through, we are going to be putting more and more responsibility on the few who are left and asking them to do it in a tremendously short period of time.

Maybe a long time down the road there might be some administrative savings, but they are very small in comparison to the kind of confusion and difficulties that it's going to cause in the short term, and in comparison to what we see as being transition costs. Would you like to add to that?

Mr Kyle Murray: No, I think you've covered it all. Mr Wildman: Thank you for your presentation. Following from what you've just said, the minister himself has identified a \$150-million saving across the province out of a total expenditure of about \$13.5 billion, so it's a little over 1% saving through amalgamations. You're indicating that it may in fact cost more in the short term. Of the \$150 million, \$9 million comes from cuts in resource materials to classrooms, by the way.

I want to focus my question on your suggestion of a one-year delay. You know that other jurisdictions have cut the number of boards. British Columbia, for instance, did substantially cut the number of boards. They had fewer in the beginning but they took three years to do it. You've indicated you have eight months to do it and you don't have any indication of transition funding. Why do you think a one-year delay would make it easier for the transition?

Ms MacGregor: I would cite, for example, the sorts of difficulties that are likely to emerge in attempting to rationalize the number of collective agreements we deal with. We went through that somewhat at arm's length when the French boards were set up, and I was noticing just in this morning's Citizen there are comments to that effect, how long it took to work through that.

There will also have to be adjustments in program. Some of those are not that easily or quickly done, nor should they be, because unfortunately when you hurry things, that's when mistakes are made and you can end up paying the cost in possibly having to go to court over things or whatever. It would be very helpful if things proceed at the rate they do; we will look to the EIC to

provide us with some guidelines and some help in this area, not being able to blackball what boards do, but if they could at least give us some guidance, hopefully drawn from the experience in other jurisdictions, that might be helpful.

Our staff are looking at how it's been done municipally, but once again, generally speaking this sort of major amalgamation has not been accomplished in the

kind of time period that is being set out here.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms MacGregor and Mr Murray, for being here this morning and making your presentation.

### ASSOCIATION DES ENSEIGNANTES ET DES ENSEIGNANTS FRANCO-ONTARIENS

La Présidente: J'appelle maintenant l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens provinciale. Monsieur Régimbal et Monsieur Matte, vous avez 15 minutes pour votre présentation. S'il nous reste du temps, le comité vous posera des questions.

M. Roger Régimbal: Merci, Madame la Présidente. M. Matte ne pouvait pas m'accompagner. alors c'est

M. André Pinard qui est avec moi ce matin.

L'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens remercie le comité de l'Assemblée législative de lui donner l'occasion de présenter quelques réflexions pendant ces consultations sur le projet de loi 104. L'AEFO représente les quelque 7 000 enseignantes et enseignants des écoles de langue française de l'Ontario.

Premièrement, l'AEFO appuie le projet de loi 104 en ce qui a trait à la création des conseils scolaires de langue française publics et catholiques. L'Association et la communauté franco-ontarienne réclament la gestion scolaire depuis plus de 25 ans. L'Association est confiante que la mise en oeuvre des conseils scolaires de langue française contribuera à l'amélioration de l'éducation offerte par la province aux jeunes Franco-Ontariennes et Franco-Ontariens.

L'AEFO entend donc participer pleinement à la mise en oeuvre des conseils scolaires de langue française en collaboration avec le ministère et les organismes en éducation. Nous avons mis en place des équipes de transition au sein de chacun des nouveaux conseils scolaires de district et nous sommes à développer des mesures qui faciliteront la mise en place de ces conseils scolaires de district.

Lors de notre assemblée annuelle la semaine dernière les délégués ont approuvé ces comités de transition et ils

sont déjà à l'oeuvre.

Cependant, le projet de loi est silencieux sur plusieurs points. Ceci nous préoccupe beaucoup. Le projet de loi 104 doit être interprété en tenant compte de la perspective anglophone et de la perspective francophone. Pour les anglophones c'est une fusion, «a merger», de conseils. Prenons par exemple : Essex-Windsor seront fusionnés. Les employés transféreront deux conseils. Pour les francophones c'est une création. Dans le même exemple que je viens de prendre, les employés quitteront le conseil d'origine et parviendront de six conseils différents dont 11 conventions collectives à réconcilier.

Au niveau des protections, l'AEFO déplore le fait que le projet de loi ne prévoit aucune garantie contractuelle pour le personnel enseignant. Pourtant, de telles garanties faisaient partie intégrante de la Loi 30 sur le parachèvement des conseils scolaires catholiques ainsi que de la Loi 109 sur la création du Conseil scolaire de langue française d'Ottawa-Carleton.

Notre mémoire contient une série de principes sur lesquels devraient se baser ces protections. Je vous en fait

grâce en ce moment.

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Nos enseignantes et enseignants des écoles de langue française, contrairement à leurs collègues des écoles de langue anglaise, se verront quitter leur employeur actuel pour joindre la nouvelle entité. Il est donc nécessaire de bien ordonner la désignation du transfert du personnel.

Pour cette raison-là nous recommandons que le projet de loi 104 soit amendé pour inclure les dispositions de l'article 135 de la Loi sur l'éducation réglementant la

désignation et le transfert du personnel.

Le personnel enseignant des écoles de langue française veut tout mettre en oeuvre pour réussir la mise en place des nouveaux conseils de district. Il est très important pour nous que cette mise en place soit une réussite.

L'AEFO a toujours maintenu que la création des conseils scolaires de langue française allait de pair avec un financement adéquat. L'AEFO reconnaît que le ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation a promis que cette réforme conduirait à un financement équitable et juste.

L'abolition de la taxe résidentielle à des fins scolaires et un financement total en provenance du ministère de l'Éducation et de la Formation se veut, selon nous, une mesure qui donne un pouvoir qui pourrait être exagéré au gouvernement. Le gouvernement pourrait à l'avenir réduire unilatéralement et sans recours son appui face à l'éducation.

Au niveau de la composition de la commission d'amélioration, l'AEFO demande que le projet de loi stipule que la commission soit composée d'au moins deux francophones si le nombre de membres de la commission est établi à cinq, et de trois s'il est établi à sept. Ce changement est dans le but de faciliter le travail de la commission.

En effet, nous ne croyons pas que les plus grandes difficultés proviendront de l'amalgamation des conseils, mais plutôt que les véritables difficultés proviendront de la création des conseils scolaires de langue française car il faudra identifier les avoirs des conseils existants et décider ce qui sera prélevé au profit de ces nouveaux conseils. Nous sommes persuadés que la majorité du temps, la commission sera pris à régler des problèmes de division des avoirs.

Une option serait de créer un sous-comité francophone. Ce sous-comité francophone pourrait avoir un droit de regard sur les questions des conseils de lange française.

Au niveau du mandat, l'article 335(c), qui définit les responsabilités de la commission envers les conseils scolaires de langue française, est trop imprécis et incomplet.

La commission doit avoir le pouvoir de constituer des comités locaux d'amélioration de l'éducation.

L'article 335(f) doit être radié. L'AEFO s'oppose à l'impartition, «outsourcing» et «contracting oul», des services aux écoles pour deux raisons : la première est nécessairement au niveau syndical ; la deuxième tient au mandat linguistique et culturel des écoles. L'impartition des services rendra plus difficile l'obtention des services en langue française, ce qui pourrait influencer négativement la qualité de l'éducation offerte aux jeunes francophones et nuire à la mission même des écoles de langue française.

L'AEFO estime que les articles 335(g) et (h), tout en appuyant le bien-fondé et les avantages de la participation des parents à la vie de l'école, vont bien au-delà de

l'objectif du présent projet de loi.

Les comités de l'amélioration de l'éducation au niveau local : L'AEFO croit que l'article 338(2) doit être modifié pour préciser que le personnel enseignant doit nécessairement faire partie des comités locaux d'amélioration de l'éducation.

Au niveau du pouvoir décisionnel de la commission, l'AEFO s'oppose à ce que les décisions de la commission soient définitives, comme le stipule l'article 344(2). L'AEFO souhaite que le projet de loi 104 prévoie un mécanisme d'arbitrage comme celui qui avait été établi dans le cadre de la Loi 30 sur le parachèvement et que l'on retrouve à l'article 137 de la Loi sur l'éducation.

En effet, il est tout à fait logique que l'on puisse faire appel à des décisions de la commission sur des questions importantes. On doit se souvenir que les francophones seront très minoritaires au sein des comités locaux d'amélioration de l'éducation et qu'ils seront aussi minoritaires au sein de la commission.

Nos droits de Franco-Ontariennes et Franco-Ontariens : Nous serons finalement reconnus lors de la création des conseils de langue française. Il est donc important que rien ne vienne retarder le processus. Les conseils de langue française doivent voir le jour le 1<sup>er</sup> janvier 1998.

Je termine en véhiculant le message sous-jacent à la décision de la cour de l'Ontario de juin 1996 au sujet de l'école secondaire Sainte-Famille de Dufferin-Peel : Les droits de la communauté francophone sont protégés par l'article 23 de la Charte canadienne des droits et libertés et personne ne peut les mettre en attente temporairement.

La Présidente : Nous avons presque quatre minutes, four minutes for questions. On commence avec

M. Grandmaître.

M. Bernard Grandmaître (Ottawa-Est) : Moi aussi je me réjouis que le gouvernement a finalement encaissé notre demande depuis toujours de créer sept conseils de

langue française additionnels.

Par contre, vous mentionnez dans votre présentation que vous êtes concerné par un financement adéquat. Je suis tout à fait d'accord avec vous qu'un financement adéquat est primordial. Depuis l'annonce du gouvernement, quelle assurance avez-vous reçue du gouvernement — comment ces 11 conseils seront crées — et est-ce que le gouvernement vous a mentionné le financement de ces conseils, la subvention par élève, combien sera cette subvention ? Est-ce que vous avez eu des rencontres avec le gouvernement ? Ces conseils doivent être en place dès le 1<sup>er</sup> janvier 1998. Quel travail a été fait depuis l'annonce du gouvernement ?

M. Régimbal: On n'a eu à ce moment-ci au niveau du financement aucune indication autre ce que qu'on entend un peu partout. Il n'y a aucun chiffre qui a été établi quant au processus. On n'a pas eu d'indications claires, nettes et précises sur la façon de laquelle ça va être fait. Cependant, on est prêts à tenter le coup. On est prêt à s'assurer que ça fonctionne. C'est la première fois qu'on a à la portée de la main nos conseils de langue française, et à partir de ceci il faut quand même tenter la chasse aux coureurs. Bien que, au niveau du financement, on n'a rien vu de concret, je crois que pour les francophones ça ne peut pas être pire que ce qu'on a auiourd'hui.

M. Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Merci, Monsieur Régimbal, pour votre présentation. J'appuie fortement les principes que vous avez mentionnés à la page 2. Je suis aussi d'accord avec la préoccupation que vous avez mentionnée à la page 4. En effet, rien ne permettrait à la population locale de financer des programmes qu'elle aurait choisis. C'est une grande préoccupation pour vous et pour nous à Toronto parce qu'on a initié beaucoup de programmes. Maintenant, avec ce projet de loi, ça va partir. J'ai une question. Est-ce que vous pensez qu'il y a quelque chose de bien dans ce projet de loi qui va aider les deux joueurs les plus importants : les étudiants et les

M. Régimbal: Oui, je crois, le fait d'être capable de travailler en français, d'être capable d'arriver. Puis lorsqu'un conseil scolaire établit ses listes de priorité, il n'est pas obligé de passer la sienne à travers du filtre anglophone ; il n'est pas obligé de le faire de la même façon que les anglophones. De même que ça donne la chance à la communauté franco-ontarienne de se prendre en main au niveau de l'éducation, c'est pour cette raisonlà qu'on a mis sur pied toute la question des états généraux de langue française qu'on a déjà, et on va déterminer les besoins des Franco-Ontariennes et des Franco-Ontariens en matière d'éducation.

Le grand gagnant sera l'étudiant dans la salle de classe, parce que à ce moment-là on va être capable de répondre à ses besoins.

1120

professeurs?

Mr Skarica: As some of the French-language public district school boards are quite large geographically, do you know what plans you have, if any, to deal with the

large geographic units?

M. Régimbal : Au niveau de la géographie de l'étendue, il va falloir apprendre à faire les choses différemment. Il va falloir que dans les lois du gouvernement, il y ait des changements et pas avoir que les conseillers scolaires soient obligés d'être en prise - déjà on regarde toute la question de la nouvelle technologie, les cours à distance, tout ce genre d'approche-là pour être capable de le faire. De même au niveau géographique, il faut probablement regarder des familles d'écoles, comme on l'a fait au niveau de l'association, regarder ça pour être capable d'intégrer ce genre de région pour être capable de

Des distances aujourd'hui, avec les nouvelles technologies, ça ne change pas grand-chose. La seule chose où il faut faire attention, c'est lorsqu'on fait le transfert de personnel, toutes ces questions de transfert font la différ-

ence.

La Présidente: Merci bien, Monsieur Régimbal et Monsieur Matte, d'être venus ici ce matin et d'avoir fait votre présentation.

### ONTARIO PARENT COUNCIL

The Chair: I ask the Ontario Parent Council to come forward: Bill Robson, Shari Ritter and Ken Slemko. Good morning. We're pleased to have you here this morning.

Mr Bill Robson: Good morning. Thank you for taking the time to bring the Ontario Parent Council in front of the committee to speak. We're delighted to be here.

I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce myself, Bill Robson. I'm the chair of the Ontario Parent Council. We have two members of the council's executive committee with us, Shari Ritter and Ken Slemko, to provide moral support and elbow me if I go astray here.

My remarks today are a synopsis of a written brief that is in front of you. In the interest of getting you to lunch at some point and leaving some time for questions, I'll

try to be brief in my opening remarks.

The parent council, as you will know, is an advisory body to the Minister of Education and Training. There's a full blurb on it in the handout. I will merely observe here that it and many of its members predate this government.

The Ontario Parent Council believes that Bill 104 has the potential to bring about an improved system of education for Ontario students. The council supports the intent of the bill regarding fewer school boards and fewer trustees, it supports the strengthening of financial accountability of boards, it certainly supports the freeing up of resources for the classroom and it supports the establishment of the Education Improvement Commis-

Where we feel that Bill 104 would benefit from strengthening is in the area of local and parent participation in decision-making. To that end the OPC would make the following recommendations for changes to the

First we would like to see school councils have legislated authority, as the parent council in the previous incarnation recommended. We would also recommend that the mandate of the Education Improvement Commission be more specific as it pertains to making recommendations on strengthening the role of school councils and increased parent involvement in education governance. We think the Education Improvement Commission should be mandated to create an education improvement committee or committees that would recommend changes that would lead to a stronger role for school councils and parent involvement in education governance.

We would like parent membership to be mandated on the EIC and on the committees it may establish, with sufficient francophone and Catholic membership to ensure fair representation of their issues. We also would recommend that the eligibility criteria for trustees be extended to exclude dependants of school board employees.

In the interest of leaving time for questions and answers, let me take a moment on the four of these recommendations that are related to school councils. First of all, as concerns legislative authority, Bill 104 clearly will change the face of education and governance in Ontario as we know it. Fewer trustees and larger jurisdictions can free up resources, but it does risk widening the gap between school communities and their governing bodies. In our view, the best way to fill this gap is with those who are closest to the action: the students, parents, educators and community members who live, work and go to school each day in their own school communities.

Interruption.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, during the course of these hearings there are going to be some views expressed that don't meet with one or more people's approval. However, in the interest of fairness, we must allow every individual to express their views. You all will get your opportunity to voice your views.

Mr Robson: In the opinion of the parent council, effective school councils are the logical way of making sure that education decisions are made in the most effective way and have the best possible impact on students. The OPC therefore urges that the establishment of school councils in Ontario schools be explicitly stated in Bill 104. We suggest in our brief that the bill be renamed in a way that would reflect that, but in the interest of time I won't read through that.

With regard to the mandate of the EIC, the parent council is concerned that the present wording of Bill 104 regarding the EIC's mandate in relation to school councils and parent involvement is vague. The feasibility of increasing the role of school councils and parent involvement is not in doubt. What needs investigation is the

means of achieving it.

The OPC therefore recommends the following amendments to the bill:

Section 335(3)(g) concerning the mandate of the EIC should require the EIC to provide recommendations on how school councils should play a larger role in decisions relating to their schools, including the authorities of school councils; the ability of councils to delegate authority to principals; the role of councils in the selection, evaluation and renewal of term of principals; and the legislation and regulations needed to define the role and support the operation of school councils in Ontario.

Additionally, we would recommend that section 335(3)(h) be strengthened to state that the EIC will consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations to the minister on where parental involvement in education governance will be most

beneficial and how it should be achieved.

With regard to the education improvement committees, we would recommend that following section 339, a new section be added that would establish a committee or committees to address the expanded authorities and responsibilities of school councils and the role of parents in education governance.

With regard to education improvement committees and parent representation, the OPC would recommend that the words "of parents" be added to section 338(2) so that it

would read:

"In developing the process, the commission shall have regard to the importance of achieving representation on the committees of the interests that, in the opinion of the commission, are likely to be affected by the transition to the new system of education governance, including but not limited to the interests of parents, of persons represented by existing boards, minority language sections of existing boards and French-language advisory committees."

The OPC recommends that Bill 104 ensure parent representation on the EIC and the committees it establishes. In order to ensure fair representation of francophone and Catholic issues throughout the restructuring process, the OPC also recommends that the EIC and the committees it establishes include representatives of francophone and Catholic parents.

In conclusion, I would state the obvious to begin, that the education system of Ontario is undergoing profound change. To ensure that this change results in a more responsive system, parents must be assured a greater role in the decisions affecting students and schools in their

community.

With the changes we are proposing, Bill 104 can move Ontario towards this outcome. There must be a clear focus on the classroom and on providing schools with the resources and flexibility they need to meet high provincial standards while responding to local conditions. Parents and school councils must play a key role in Ontario's new education system.

Thank you very much. I hope I've left some time for questions.

1130

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Robson. You did indeed: you left us about five minutes. We begin with the third

Mr Wildman: I noticed at the beginning of your presentation that you say you support the bill as presented, that you think it strengthens financial accountability and frees up resources for the classroom. Are you aware that the minister has indicated he wants to take a billion dollars out of the education system and there will be further cuts starting in 1998?

Mr Robson: What I would observe is that the parent council, looking around the province and reflecting the experience of its members, feels that a number of the province's boards have not proved to be very effective custodians of the funds that should be going into the

classroom.

Mr Wildman: Does that mean yes?

Mr Robson: I said we support the intent of the bill with regard to freeing up resources for the classroom.

Mr Wildman: No. I asked you if you were aware of something. Are you aware of the minister's commitment?

Mr Robson: I'm not aware that he has specified that he is going to be taking an amount of the magnitude you suggested straight out of the system. What we're supporting in our brief is a way that we think will ensure that more of the resources that go into education in Ontario will end up in the classroom.

Mr Wildman: But there may be fewer resources going into education.

Mr Robson: You could take some resources out of the system and still end up with more in the classroom. It's what happens in the classroom that's our key concern.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr Wildman: Excuse me, Chair. I just asked that question to be able to pose a following question, and the

presenter, for some reason, has decided to be argumentative.

The Chair: With respect, Mr Wildman -

Mr Wildman: The fact is the minister has said this bill will save \$150 million out of a total —

The Chair: Mr Wildman, we're going to have to move on to Mr Pettit.

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): Thank you very much for your presentation. On page 1 you indicate that you endorse school councils having legislated authority. We did hear some immediate opposition here to that proposal and I believe we've heard it before. I don't want you to speak for the opposition, but would you speculate for us about why there would be opposition to school councils having legislated authority, from your point of view?

Mr Robson: What's a bit surprising to us on the council is that some people who previously supported school councils appear to have changed their minds on that issue. We feel that school councils are a very effective way of encouraging parent involvement and strengthening local decision-making. Supporters of the status quo might logically see increased representation at the school level as a challenge to other centres of authority that currently exist, and certainly that's possibly true. We tend to favour school councils because we see them as a more effective way of directing resources around the school and encouraging parent participation. Clearly, school councils can, in some people's minds, take on perhaps a larger-than-life look, but we feel that when you look at the way school councils can operate in encouraging the school community to come together, they look like a very valuable part of an education system.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Thank you for the presentation. First of all, let me welcome everyone to

Ottawa Centre today for these hearings.

I have two quick questions for you, and the first is along the lines of Mr Wildman's question. Your brief says you support the freeing up of resources for the classroom, yet the minister is talking about removing another billion dollars from the total system, totally out of education. So I'll ask you that question. Second, do you believe that school councils should be replacing school boards?

Mr Robson: In regard to the first question, I would repeat what I said earlier about the focus on resources in the classroom. There is no one more concerned about making sure that resources get applied in the classroom than the parents at a school and the teachers at that school also. That is the sort of voice that gets empowered in this with school councils because they're the ones who are seeing what's happening on the ground. Again, that's one of the major reasons we are supportive of school councils.

Would school councils replace school boards? No, they would not, but what we would like is to see school councils take on some functions that don't naturally lend themselves very well to direction from the centre and the school board. A lot of the issues that affect the quality of instruction at a school, the quality of the school environment, are things that could be done at the school level. They would complement school boards, not replace them.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Robson, to you and your co-presenters for taking the time to be with us today

Mrs McLeod: Madam Chair, may I ask a question for the record? I believe it was indicated that around this table there has been resistance to either legislated authority for school councils or to school councils themselves. I have been present at all the hearings and I believe all members of all parties are strongly supportive and have expressed only strong support for school councils. In fact, we know that the school councils that have presented to the committee are the ones that have expressed concerns about this bill and the implications for councils. If there's anything counter to that in the record, I would appreciate being informed of that.

Mr Robson: Thank you. The support for school

councils is encouraging to hear.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Madam Chairman: Following through on that, I'd like to make a request of our research officer, that he provide for committee members a synopsis of the presentations that have been made to us by existing school councils with regard to their views about legislated authority and/or increased control of functions currently carried out by trustees, by school councils. My impression is similar to those of Ms McLeod's, that the opposition that has been expressed has come from school council representatives, not from members of the committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Wildman. That's not a point of order, but —

Mr Wildman: It's a request.

The Chair: The researcher has that request. We will attempt to provide that information.

Just before I call the next group, I want to remind members of the committee that what has been circulated is a response to Ms McLeod's question on February 25 on witness statements on trustees. I trust everyone has that in front of them. If there are any questions, we can deal with them at some other time.

### COMMUNITY LIVING - STORMONT COUNTY

The Chair: I ask Community Living — Stormont County, Mary MacDonald, to come forward. Thank you very much for being here this morning. You have 15

minutes for your presentation.

Ms Mary MacDonald: On behalf of the Stormont Community Living education committee, I want to thank you for this opportunity to be heard. I'd like to discuss Bill 104 and its implications to special education. Under Bill 104, the English-language sections of the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry public and separate school boards would see themselves amalgamated with Prescott and Russell, Lanark, Leeds and Grenville. Our concerns over this proposed mega-board are as follows:

(1) Special education advisory committees have been an important forum for associations to communicate their parents' views on education to local school boards. The representatives understand the needs and desires of the students and their families within their communities. This new board will encompass a territory of approximately 11,759 square kilometres. The travel time from the Quebec border to Gananoque is approximately two and a

half hours and, at the very least, three hours from the Quebec border to Perth. As the members of SEACs are usually volunteers, it will prove very expensive in both time and money for representatives to travel such long distances to meetings; therefore, effective local representation on special education advisory committees will likely be jeopardized.

1140

(2) With the coming amalgamation of four school boards will come the need to combine four special education policies into one. Where will inclusive education fit? The Ministry of Education has stated and continues to state that integration is the norm in Ontario. Well, I'm here to say that true integration, or inclusion, as we prefer to call it, is not only not the norm but that access to inclusion is very unequal in Ontario, not only from board to board but also from school to school within the same board.

Students and parents are still at the mercy of the goodwill of the community school principal and its teachers. There appears to be a fear of the unknown, due to a lack of training, and a general resistance to change by school personnel. The time has come for the government to give clear directions to school boards in favour of inclusive education.

What I mean by "inclusion," and I'm assuming the ministry means the same when it uses the term "integration," is that the students spend the majority of their day in a regular classroom with age-appropriate peers in their

local community school.

My own school board in Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry talks of integration, but each year it's a fight for inclusion. Only students whose parents are willing and able to carry on the fight are being included. Those in segregated classrooms and programs are lucky if they are allowed to mingle with the school population during lunch and recess. We still have a segregated school that is located outside of the city. There is no inclusion beyond elementary school for the students with a developmental challenge.

Inclusion is a very positive experience for all students. We have provided you with examples of this in our brief, plus some students' and adults' views on inclusion and their discouragement and disappointment over being segregated. Inclusion raises achievement levels for all students, revitalizes teachers and invigorates schools. There can be no funding value placed on the personal benefits to all students who are exposed to inclusion. Numerous studies have shown that inclusive education is often less expensive than its segregated alternative.

The Hamilton-Wentworth school board has reported that inclusion saves money. A study done in 1993 by the Ministry of Education in Ontario concluded that inclusive education is no more expensive than segregated education. The real savings will be seen when persons with disabilities are no longer seen as unemployable, as different or as second-class citizens who are dependent on

society to provide for them.

The Ministry of Education needs to ensure that inclusion happens and that these negative views become a thing of the past. If the Ministry of Education fully stands behind its statement that integration is the norm in

Ontario, we need to make some changes to the Education Act to ensure this is enforced by local boards and that parents no longer have to fight for something that should already exist.

We have made several recommendations that we hope the ministry will take into consideration:

(1) It is recommended that the government, in its amalgamation process, create school boards that will be geographically manageable.

(2) It is recommended that the government modify the Education Act to ensure that inclusive education will in

fact be the norm in Ontario.

(3) It is recommended that school boards provide adequate supports to differently abled students in the regular classroom in order to ensure equitable opportunity for success.

(4) It is recommended that the amendments to draft regulation 305, as considered in the spring of 1995, be

legislated to support inclusive education.

(5) It is recommended that a new component be added in the training of new teachers, teaching how to adapt curriculum and how to make inclusion a success, and also that some practice teaching sessions be done in an inclusive school.

(6) It is recommended that special education advisory committees be maintained in a way that allows for genuine parental input at the grass-roots levels.

(7) It is recommended that the Ministry of Education and Training hold local school boards accountable to use special education advisory committees in the manner outlined in legislation so that they truly are advisory committees on special education.

I'm now going to turn it over to Rick, who is going to present some more views.

Mr Rick Tutt: I want to focus my remarks from the perspective of students with intellectual disabilities, and also on Bill 104, particularly the Education Improvement Commission as I understand it from the proposed legislation

I think the Education Improvement Commission has an opportunity during its tenure to make some major inroads in education in this province and also to leave a legacy with the government and the ministry. Bill 104 talks about effectiveness, quality and accountability in education. From my perspective, having worked with both Community Living Stormont and previously with the Ontario Association for Community Living and having a fairly good perspective on education across the province, accountability is something that has not existed within the Ministry of Education or probably within boards of education in this province when it comes to education of students with intellectual disabilities.

The ministry has a policy on inclusion which has never been enforced. It has never been enforced by the ministry and very few school boards in this province use inclusive education as the norm. Parents are having more and more trouble having their children attend a normal, typical neighbourhood school, both because of the fact that the ministry is not enforcing its own policies and because local boards of education are not.

The commission can look at commonalities and differences among boards, and they range from the Hamilton-

Wentworth separate school board, which practises true inclusion where all students are welcomed, where all students are educated in regular schools alongside their neighbours with appropriate supports — it varies from that to a situation in Ottawa-Carleton where the four boards of education operate two archaic segregated schools that provide less than appropriate education for students with intellectual disabilities. Probably one of the most difficult places to receive a quality inclusive education in Ontario is in the location you're sitting in today, ladies and gentlemen. One of the reasons is the fact that the Ministry of Education and Training is not holding boards accountable for ministry policy.

The commission can also look at myriad studies that show the effectiveness of inclusion and the less than effectiveness — I would go as far as to say the damage that segregated education causes students, not only students with disabilities but also those without disabilities, who are themselves segregated when we have

segregated education.

The commission can also look at cost-effectiveness. A lot of studies are coming out of not only the United States, where research seems to be a growth industry, but also out of Ontario, where the Ministry of Education and Training's own studies a few years ago have indicated that inclusive education is no more expensive, and where boards of education are now proving that inclusive education is more cost-effective.

The commission should also, I would hope, look at the issue of legislative change, change to the Education Act to ensure that the policy of the Ministry of Education and Training is interpreted into legislation so that all children

will receive a quality education.

The Common Sense Revolution is supposed to make some common sense to students in this province, and I think this is an opportunity to really make some common sense for students with intellectual disabilities. Ontario is far behind some other provinces in this country and it's time to catch up. I think it's high time that we either remove the label "special education" from the school system or make all education special education. I'd rather see regular education for all children, with appropriate specialized supports for whatever child needs it.

I have concerns with the direction the ministry is taking around reducing finances to education. I'm extremely concerned, around students with intellectual disabilities, that special ed supports tend to be the first things to be cut, the last things in place and the first things to be cut. I don't want to get beyond the realm of education, but if we continue to cut education, what we're doing is presenting a legacy to ourselves, to our children and to those who are going to come beyond us to pay a hell of a lot more money in years to come than we're spending now on education and other social services. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We have a minute

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Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): This is a very serious area you have raised this morning, and we thank you very much for being here to raise it. I know the concern is very real for those of us who have been on school boards; 20 years ago we first integrated a classroom in Peel when I was a trustee.

You say that the policy or the direction of the ministry has never been enforced by the ministry, and I hear what you're saying about what's happening locally here in the Ottawa area, but in other parts of the province where it is working, happily for those students and for their families, do you see that it is happening because of the autonomy of the local board and that those elected trustees are taking responsibility for ensuring that integration and inclusion is happening?

Mr Tutt: That's a loaded question. Yes, I think quality education, and I'm talking now about inclusive education, happens generally in this province when boards of education or local schools actually take the initiative to do it. I don't see it happening in this province because of ministry initiative. I'm saying yes to the comment that

was contained in your question.

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate the comment Mary made about the sheer distance and how much more difficult it's going to be for parents concerned about special needs kids to be heard, to have their presence felt, and also the

concern about funding.

The ministry has had a consultant verify their assumptions about the ways in which they can save some money through school board amalgamation. The total they look to achieve is \$150 million. In order to achieve that these are the ministry's own figures - \$1.3 million comes directly out of educational support, the very people that I think you would agree are essential if there is going to be support for integration in the classroom. I worry, given that, which is the first indication we've had of where educational support fits for this ministry in bringing about school board amalgamation as the ministry takes over funding, that we're going to give a flat figure to boards and if the boards can't meet the needs for inclusion, the ministry is going to basically say, "That's the board's problem." Where does that leave you as advocates for support for special needs kids?

Mr Tutt: I guess my concern is where money is being spent within the boards. We've got studies and experience in other boards of education that if there is a limited amount of money, let's spend the money in the most effective way possible. I think the most effective way possible is by educating all children together with appropriate supports. When we have segregated education, it costs a lot of money. When we have segregated schools, we're putting an awful lot of resources around special education for a very few number of children. More and more parents want their children to go to regular schools, and specialized education, whether it's in segregated schools or in self-contained classes, tends to draw more and more money from the supports that could be applied to children and could be there for children in regular education.

There have been some comments made that for every segregated school, if that money was taken and disbursed across the regular education system, many children could be in regular education with full-time teaching assistants. I'm not suggesting full-time teaching assistants is the route to go for all children; it may be for some children.

Mr Wildman: I take very seriously your comments with regard to the term "special education," so I under-

stand what you're saying, and I also understand it in terms of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry and Lanark and Prescott-Russell. There have been suggestions that there might be two boards rather than one. I don't think that would resolve the problem that you're putting forward.

Let me ask you this specifically with regard to educational assistants. The minister defines those people as outside the classroom, as part of his division between what is classroom expenditure and what is outside. If the minister is intending to take a significant amount out of education starting again in 1998, up to \$1 billion, what do you see for the ability of boards, or the willingness of boards, to provide educational assistants who could spur more inclusion of the students you're talking about?

**Ms MacDonald:** Our local board doesn't want to provide them now. That's why we have segregation.

Mr Wildman: So you don't see that you're going to

get any.

Ms MacDonald: It's not going to get any better, no. The Chair: On that note, thank you very much, Ms MacDonald and Mr Tutt, for being here this morning.

### ASSOCIATION DES ENSEIGNANTES ET DES ENSEIGNANTS FRANCO-ONTARIENS, UNITÉ PRESCOTT-RUSSELL ÉLÉMENTAIRE CATHOLIQUE

The Chair: We now call on the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens de Prescott-Russell, Richard Lanthier. Bonjour. C'est un plaisir de vous avoir avec nous ce matin. Vous avez 15 minutes pour votre présentation, et s'il y a du temps,

le comité vous posera des questions.

M. Richard Lanthier: Merci bien. Bonjour à tous et à toutes. Moi, je fais la présentation à titre de l'AEFO locale. C'est un plaisir aujourd'hui de parler au Comité permanent des affaires sociales. Vous avez probablement déjà notre mémoire. Je vais probablement répéter ou faire allusion à certains propos provinciaux, mais aujourd'hui, les gens que je représente, ce sont les 425 enseignants de l'élémentaire catholique dans ma région, puis environ 280 suppléants qui sont majoritairement francophones dans Prescott-Russell.

Nous desservons environ 7 700 enfants à l'élémentaire et le projet de loi 104, pour nous, nous semble réjouissant car nous autres, on vivait déjà notre gestion scolaire catholique française. Nous étions déjà presque seuls à avoir la gestion, et enfin on reconnaît ceci, ce qui est très bien, et nous espérons qu'en nous joignant à S-D-G, Stormont, Dundas et Glengarry, à ce groupe-là, donc, environ 250 collègues de plus et 150 suppléants et suppléantes, nous ferons équipe ensemble, une équipe intéressante.

Un peu comme ma contrepartie provinciale, l'AEFO Prescott-Russell élémentaire catholique appuie le projet de loi 104. C'est une bonne loi pour autant qu'elle va accroître l'obligation de nos patrons, les conseillers scolaires et les autorités scolaires, la haute direction, à rendre compte, évidemment, aux parents, ce qu'ils faisaient déjà, et aux enseignants, aux contribuables, et surtout à mener le monde de l'éducation de chez nous à une plus grande efficacité et surtout à offrir aux enfants une plus grande qualité d'éducation.

Nous nous attendons à une amélioration nette dans nos classes, principalement. Les résultats doivent être pour l'élève, donc, il doit y avoir une amélioration de nos conditions de classe, de nos conditions de travail. Cette loi-là doit prévoir la participation aussi des enseignants et des enseignantes des deux conseils avec les élus, les cadres supérieurs et les groupes qui formeront les équipes de transition. Alors, il faut créer une nouvelle entité, peu vorace en administration, mais efficace ou vorace en nouvelles leçons, en classes intéressantes pour les jeunes.

Je prends le deuxième volet de mon mémoire, qui est

la protection des enseignants.

Le projet de loi 104, à mon avis, doit garantir le contrat présent du personnel enseignant. Comme vous le savez déjà, la situation économique et le moral des profs est plutôt en difficulté dû à cette situation, et comme pour le projet de loi 30, nous avons besoin de garanties. Chez nous, il y a 240 des 425 enseignants qui sont des jeunes, qui viennent de subir les journées Bob Rae, lourdement, qui sont en manque d'augmentations statutaires, ou du moins qui l'étaient. Il y a 25 membres qui sont en liste de rappel et puis 14 membres qui sont en invalidité. Donc, il y a beaucoup d'incertitude. La loi 104, avec une nouvelle structure, espérons, va réussir à atténuer ça.

On doit sûrement modifier 104 pour respecter les

principes suivants:

(1) Garantir les postes, les droits de rappel et les familles d'école. Un peu tout à l'heure, on a parlé de distances. Prescott-Russell, S-D-G, il y a quand même des distances des domiciles. Alors, dans le raisonnable, on devra s'assurer qu'on garantie qu'on est gardé par famille d'école et qu'il y a un certain jeu, évidemment, mais raisonnable.

(2) Qu'il y a une protection dans le projet de loi contre les mutations obligatoires que je viens de décrire, qu'on reconnaisse la convention collective ou les conventions collectives et les acquis, du moins jusqu'à la signature d'une nouvelle convention collective. Donc, il y a encore des contrats verts, des contrats blancs, et une entente contractuelle de conventions collectives en place avec des acquis qui sont en place qui se poursuivent d'ici jusqu'à ce qu'on en fasse une autre.

(3) Que l'on reconnaisse et que l'on garde l'ancienneté, les congés de maladie, et puis que l'on étudie la

gratification de retraite.

(5) Que l'on respecte, évidemment, la grille salariale et

l'expérience des enseignants.

(6) Qu'il n'y ait aucune perte salariale. Je veux rappeler au comité, qui ne sont pas sans savoir, que depuis environ 1990-91, il n'y a définitivement pas eu d'augmentations ; il n'y a qu'un maintien des acquis des enseignants.

Chez nous, j'ai parlé tout à l'heure des suppléants et suppléantes. Nous aimerions bien que ces gens-là demeurent affiliés à l'AEFO locale et qu'ils demeurent sous la Loi sur les relations de travail de l'Ontario.

Alors, ce que je recommande, c'est que ces principes soient inclus dans la loi 104.

Pour ce qui est du financement, l'AEFO cherche un financement équitable, un financement probablement de rattrapage nécessaire dans la région où je suis surtout, qui est un groupe minoritaire plutôt pauvre quand nous

savons qu'il y a des endroits dans la province où un élève représente environ 10 000 \$ et que pour nous, ça représente environ la moitié de ça. Alors, je pense que la question de rattrapage est importante.

Il faut vous rappeler que les manuels scolaires, le matériel didactique, les logiciels en français, ça coûte beaucoup plus cher. Dans une restructuration des 11

conseils scolaires, on devra en tenir compte.

Au niveau de fonds de transition, comme j'aborde dans mon mémoire, mettre ensemble environ 1000 enseignants, environ 400 suppléants et suppléantes, prend probablement une forme de fonds additionnels ou du moins un réaménagement des fonds qui seront économisés dans une refonte des deux groupes et, probablement, des fonds peut-être rajoutés ou peut-être économisés de démarrage, un peu comme c'est fait dans Ottawa-Carleton.

Je passe de cette étape à la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation. Nous recommandons que, s'il y en a sept membres, au moins trois soient francophones, et il serait souhaitable même qu'un d'entre eux soit de Prescott-Russell, puisque dans Prescott-Russell, il y a toute une expertise; il y a l'expertise que j'ai nommée avant. Nous avons vécu depuis 1989 le seul conseil francophone catholique, et je crois qu'ils pourraient l'apporter sûrement.

1200

Pour ce qui est de l'article 335(f), nous recommandons définitivement, et à l'arrière du mémoire vous verrez deux pages qui sont une lettre à cet effet qui a été publiée dans les journaux, que l'impartition soit radiée de la loi — c'est «outsourcing», «contracting out» etc — pour trois raisons principalement.

Une est évidente ; une est syndicale ou associative, ce que je représente, la perte des droits de certains travail-

leurs.

La deuxième raison : le mandat linguistique qui est confié aux conseils déjà francophones, le mandat culturel, le mandat de francophonie est important. Les concierges, les secrétaires et le personnel de soutien, c'est important dans un nouveau système francophone.

La troisième raison, c'est que, dans nos écoles, en ne gardant pas de permanence face à ce personnel-là, on va détruire la famille scolaire élargie. La famille scolaire élargie en français sera très importante. On doit être capable de s'adresser à la secrétaire ou au concierge et il

faut que ça fasse une unité familiale.

Je passe à une autre recommandation, les articles 335(g) et (h), qu'ils soient radiés. Nous sommes pour la question des conseils d'école et l'implication des parents. Preuve de ça: l'AEFO provinciale et locale fait de la formation au niveau des directions d'école et même des enseignants au niveau de ce qu'est un conseil d'école et a voulu, évidemment, promouvoir l'implication des parents et des conseils d'école. Cependant, on pense que la Commission, avec 104, va être par définition trop occupée avec le projet que je vais appeler d'amalgamation, de formation de conseils scolaires, et aussi, ça lui donnerait trop de pouvoir sans beaucoup de consultation, que de travailler dans cette voie.

Nous croyons encore fermement que le pouvoir législatif en région y appartient au conseil scolaire et probablement aux nouveaux conseils qui seront formés.

Je passe à une septième recommandation sur les comités d'amélioration de l'éducation, article 338(2) : que les enseignants, à notre avis, fassent obligatoirement partie de ces comités, puisque, à notre avis, ils sont déjà, en grande partie, l'éducation. Leur vie se passe avec les enfants. Ils se doivent d'être impliqués. Je veux dire que dans Prescott-Russell et S-D-G, il y a déjà des comités de transition au niveau des enseignants et il y a des comités de transition au niveau des conseils scolaires. Nous sommes au point de se parler et d'échanger de l'expertise de voir comment on peut travailler ensemble.

Enfin, une telle commission, à nos yeux, est très importante, importante à un tel point qu'elle justifie l'arbitrage. Je ne veux pas entrer longuement dans Montfort, mais je crois que, pour les commissions de ce genre-là, et surtout pour travailler à la création de nouveaux conseils scolaires, les gens doivent avoir un moyen pas nécessairement de contester — le mot serait mal choisi, mais un arbitrage des litiges possibles ou des

problématiques possibles.

Enfin, en conclusion, le projet de loi 104 modifié un peu selon ce que je viens de décrire est prometteur d'avenir si ça prône une réorganisation intelligente et bien financée. Un conseil francophone catholique qui représentera ses employés, les enseignants et les enseignantes et les autres employés, et qui verra à rendre le meilleur service éducatif possible à l'enfant francophone est ce que mes 425 membres souhaitent de 104.

Je vous remercie de m'avoir écouté.

La Présidente: Merci, Monsieur Lanthier. Nous avons seulement deux minutes. Alors, je demanderais que les questions soient très brèves. Monsieur Lalonde.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell): Je vous remercie, Richard, de vous avoir déplacé pour vous rendre ici ce matin. Je crois que vous est une des personnes choisies pour pouvoir nous faire une présentation.

Mais ce qui me fait rester sur le point d'incertitude, c'est de voir que vous dites en principe que vous êtes d'accord avec le projet de loi 104, mais aussi vous avez plusieurs points d'interrogation sur le contenu du projet de loi 104. Nous ne sommes pas clairs sur le financement, et aussi le fait que l'éducation spéciale — je crois que c'est un point très, très important lorsque nous regardons la grandeur des conseils scolaires que nous allons voir surtout sur le côté francophone. On sait que les francophones n'ont pas eu l'éducation au même niveau que les anglophones il y a un certain nombre d'années.

Aujourd'hui, nous avons beaucoup de rattrapage, et vous l'avez mentionné dans votre exposé tout à l'heure. Est-ce que vous croyez que l'éducation spéciale va être suivie de très près étant donné qu'on va avoir la grandeur de conseils scolaires que nous allons connaître ?

M. Lanthier: Moi, je vais répondre que depuis les derniers 12 ans je suis un enseignant de classes dites «spécialisées» avant d'être président de l'association. C'est une de mes plus grandes inquiétudes que je n'ai pas mentionnées ici. J'ai parlé de fonds de rattrapage. Je n'ai peut-être pas insisté suffisamment sur la nature de créer un conseil francophone, typiquement francophone. Quand je parle de fonds de transition, de fonds de rattrapage, je parle de réaménagement, moi. Je ne suis pas un administrateur. Je suis un enseignant de salle de classe.

Alors, je me dis que tout ça devrait être vu, et j'adore votre question dans le sens que, dans 104, moi, je veux définitivement qu'on aborde quelque part les droits de tous les enfants que j'ai enseignés depuis les derniers 12 ans, handicapés multiples, etc.

La Présidente : Merci. Très brièvement, Monsieur

Marchese.

M. Marchese: Merci, Monsieur Lanthier. Je sais que vous espérez recevoir un financement supplémentaire du gouvernement, et je comprends. Mais je sais aussi qu'ils vont, le ministre ou le gouvernement, diminuer l'appui qui va aux écoles ou bien aux conseils scolaires.

Pour moi, c'est une préoccupation, parce que je pense que ca va détruire le système pour nous tous, et pour vous aussi. Pensez-vous sérieusement que le gouvernement va, avec ces coupures, donner l'aide que vous

attendez?

M. Lanthier: Autant que vous, je n'y crois que peu, mais je veux au moins donner une perspective positive dans le sens de regrouper les francophones, et j'ai espoir que justement des gens comme vous vont changer le projet de façon à ce qu'il devient positif.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): Thank you very much, Richard, for attending today. Just a quick question on base funding. I'm talking about the base funding for the educational grant. Do you believe it should be somewhat equal, the base funding, per student across the province? I'm talking about the base educational grant.

M. Lanthier: Il est probable que oui, mais il sera difficile d'enlever, tant pour les francophones que pour certains groupes, des fonds supplémentaires ou des ajouts qui avaient déjà été donnés, dû au fait que j'ai déjà mentionné, si je reviens aux francophones, à la difficulté culturelle du manuel francophone, du logiciel francophone, et des choses comme ça, et de l'enfance en difficulté chez les francophones, parce qu'il faut se rappeler aussi que chez les francophones, ils semblent y avoir deux pôles importants : je ne dirais pas nécessairement beaucoup plus, mais un peu plus d'enfants en difficulté, puis un peu plus d'enfants très brillants.

La Présidente : Monsieur Lanthier, je vous remercie d'être venu ici ce matin et d'avoir présenté la position de

votre association.

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### ASSOCIATION FRANÇAISE DES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES DE L'ONTARIO

La Présidente : Maintenant, l'Association française des conseils scolaires de l'Ontario, Jocelyne Ladouceur. Bienvenue, madame. Si je peux, je vous demande de

présenter les membres de votre groupe.

M<sup>me</sup> Jocelyne Ladouceur: Merci. J'accompagne aujourd'hui les deux vice-présidents de notre association, M. Daniel Morin, vice-président du secteur public, et M. Roch Lalonde, qui représente la vice-présidence du secteur catholique. Alors, ce sont eux qui vont faire la présentation.

M. Daniel Morin: Bonjour. L'Association française des conseils scolaires de l'Ontario, l'AFCSO, vous remercie de l'occasion qui lui est offerte de vous faire part de ses réactions au projet de loi 104. Nous ne sommes pas ici aujourd'hui pour nous opposer à ce projet

de loi. Pour les membres de l'AFCSO ainsi que pour la communauté franco-ontarienne tout entière, ce projet de loi renferme un élément que nous revendiquons depuis des décennies : la création de conseils scolaires de langue française sur tout le territoire de la province. En outre, nos droits constitutionnels tels qu'exprimés dans l'article 93 de la Loi constitutionnelle de 1982 et l'article 23 de la Charte canadienne des droits et libertés sont protégés et reconnus. L'AFCSO se réjouit donc du dépôt de ce projet de loi. Nous vous encourageons de travailler ferme afin d'en assurer l'adoption rapide.

Si l'AFCSO entretient certaines préoccupations face au projet de loi 104, celles-ci se situent davantage sur le plan des échéanciers en ce qui a trait à la réglementation

qui viendra le compléter.

Vous savez que les élections scolaires et municipales se tiendront en novembre. Il reste déjà peu de temps pour assurer une transition facile de l'ancien système au nouveau modèle proposé. Tout retard risque de mettre en péril la transition. Nous sommes conscients que certains groupes considèrent une intervention juridique pour retarder la mise en oeuvre du projet de loi. Nous déplorons cette démarche. A notre avis, il faut tout faire pour garantir que les nouveaux conseils puissent partir d'un bon pied.

Le travail qui reste à accomplir est considérable. Les règles du jeu ne sont pas encore établies. La Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation, à qui on a conféré des pouvoirs exécutoires impressionnants, n'a pas encore agi. Tant que leurs directives ne seront pas émises, les mains des conseils actuels sont liées. Le vacuum ainsi créé suscite de l'appréhension au sein de la population et entraîne de ce fait de la réticence. Agissons maintenant

pour éviter que les choses ne se gâtent.

Il n'est pas clair encore quelle représentation sera accordée aux francophones au sein de la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation. Vu l'importance du mandat qui est conféré à cette commission, l'AFCSO estime qu'il faut absolument y assurer une forte présence francophone, tant parmi les commissaires eux-mêmes qu'au sein du personnel administratif. Les francophones doivent pouvoir s'y faire comprendre et dans leur langue.

Il faut se rendre à l'évidence : le travail que les francophones auront à accomplir afin d'assurer la mise en oeuvre des 11 conseils scolaires de district est beaucoup plus complexe que celui de leurs homologues anglophones. Nous serons placés dans une situation où il nous faudra aller chercher des anciens conseils une part équitable des avoirs, une part qui répond à nos besoins clairement exprimés, et ceci sans disposer de ressources humaines et financières comparables à celles auxquelles ont accès nos homologues anglophones.

Nous insistons sur l'importance d'accorder aux francophones leur juste part des avoirs des anciens conseils : au fil des ans, ils ont été accumulés par les conseils d'origine et les francophones y ont contribué aussi bien que les anglophones. Nous nous attendons à recevoir une part équitable de ces avoirs, une part qui nous permettra de répondre aux besoins de tous les élèves francophones, même dans les endroits où à l'heure actuelle il n'y a pas d'écoles de langue française. Une chose est certaine : le nouveau système de conseils de langue française de district doit produire une amélioration de la qualité de l'éducation dispensée à nos élèves. Il doit assurer que les lacunes qui entraînent actuellement un rendement médiocre dans les tests standardisés soient comblées.

L'AFCSO tient à ce que la transition des anciens conseils aux nouveaux conseils de district se fasse sans accrocs ou difficultés. Elle veut surtout éviter, dans la mesure du possible, les problèmes et les amertumes qui se sont manifestés lors du parachèvement des écoles secondaires catholiques. Nous nous engageons donc à travailler de concert avec nos homologues anglophones des conseils publics et catholiques afin d'arriver à un partage des ressources qui soit juste et équitable.

Nous avons déjà mentionné que les règles du jeu restent imprécises. Voici certains points que la commission devra régler pour assurer une bonne transition :

Le transfert des édifices ; La répartition des biens ;

Les directives et un processus sommaire pour régler les conflits ;

L'imputabilité des coûts ;

La structure décisionnelle intérimaire ;

Le cadre législatif et réglementaire ;

Les zones électorales au sein des conseils de district ; Le nombre de conseillères et de conseillers scolaires ;

L'étendue des territoires des conseils scolaires de district de langue française milite en faveur de nombres plus élevés que ceux qui sont prévus ;

La répartition des conseillères et des conseillers scolaires.

Même si tout ceci doit se faire d'ici peu afin d'assurer une transition facile et satisfaisante, il ne faut pas pour autant retarder l'adoption du projet de loi. Il faut plutôt déployer tous les efforts pour régler ces points dès que possible.

Pour l'AFCSO, le projet de loi 104 marque une autre étape dans notre marche vers la reconnaissance pleine et entière de nos droits constitutionnels. L'étape finale viendra avec le financement équitable qui nous a été promis par le gouvernement, mais que nous attendons toujours. Nous ne saurions exagérer l'importance que nous attachons à ce dernier pas dans notre long périple.

L'argent, c'est le nerf de la guerre. Pour la minorité linguistique officielle, c'est-à-dire les francophones en Ontario, un financement équitable comporte trois volets : une somme par élève qui permet d'offrir la même qualité de services éducatifs que celle qui est offerte aux élèves anglophones — cette somme pourrait même être plus élevée à cause de facteurs propres à la communauté de langue minoritaire, notamment l'éparpillement de la population et le coût supérieur du matériel pédagogique ; une somme par élève pour permettre de rattraper le terrain perdu ; et à titre de réparation, une somme par élève pour compenser les années d'abandon vécues par la communauté franco-ontarienne, abandon qui a mené directement à l'assimilation, à un taux d'analphabétisme plus élevé et à un taux de scolarisation inférieur. C'est ainsi que la Cour suprême du Canada interprète l'article 23 de la Charte, et notre communauté ne saurait se satisfaire de moins.

Nous osons croire que le projet de loi 104, assorti de ce financement équitable, marquera l'aboutissement de notre long trajet vers la justice pour les élèves francophones dans toutes nos écoles, quelle que soit la région de la province où ils habitent, quel que soit le secteur, public ou catholique, qu'ils fréquentent, quel que soit leur statut socioéconomique. Voilà pourquoi il est si important qu'il soit adopté dans les plus brefs délais. Nous vous exhortons donc de tout mettre en oeuvre pour assurer sa mise en oeuvre. Merci.

Nous avons joint aussi les buts de l'association ainsi que la composition au mémoire.

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M. Marchese: Merci pour la présentation de vos points. Je comprends votre appui de la création des conseils scolaires de langue française sur tous les territoires de la province. Ça, c'est évident. Je comprends aussi la préoccupation. Il est déjà peu de temps pour rassurer une transition facile de l'ancien système au nouveau modèle proposé. C'est notre préoccupation aussi.

J'arrive à ma question parce qu'on n'a pas de temps. Pour la minorité linguistique officielle, c'est-à-dire les francophones en Ontario, un financement équitable comporte des volets, que vous avez dit là. Le problème est que ce gouvernement veut retirer ou diminuer l'appui aux systèmes scolaires. Moi, je dis que ça va dépasser un milliard. Je pense qu'ils vont retirer deux milliards de dollars du système scolaire. Est-ce que ça va vous aider, ou comment est-ce que ça va vous aider avec la préoccupation que vous avez avec un financement équitable?

M. Morin: C'est évident que lorsque vous dites, tel que vous placez la situation, on ne peut jamais dire qu'on va nous enlever un ou deux ou trois milliards et par le fait même ajouter que oui, ça va nous aider, c'est très difficile à dire, ce serait vraiment le contraire. Mais par contre, vous l'avez dit aussi bien qu'on le dit dans notre mémoire: la gestion scolaire ayant l'importance qu'elle a, on se montre d'accord avec le projet de loi 104.

Mr Skarica: There are some groups here such as the Ontario Education Alliance that say that Bill 104 is an assault on Ontario schools. Do you agree with that, and if you don't, why don't you agree with that?

M. Roch Lalonde: Which page are you referring to?

La Présidente: C'est un autre groupe qui a dit ça.

M. Roch Lalondo: Moi mo récores et in r'ei rosses

M. Roch Lalonde: Moi, ma réponse, et je n'ai pas entendu les citations, donc, je ne saurais pas répondre.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Merci encore de vous être rendus ici ce matin. Je suis tout surpris de voir qu'on se sent très d'accord avec le projet de loi 104, lorsqu'on s'aperçoit qu'il y a beaucoup de questions de votre part. On sait que nous, les francophones, sommes souvent prêts à agir ou à accepter un peu trop vite, et puis après avoir accepté, nous nous apercevons que les ententes n'étaient pas claires. Et puis aujourd'hui ça le démontre avec le projet de loi 104, qui a beaucoup de points d'interrogation.

Je n'ai qu'à regarder le Collège d'Alfred, qui n'a pas été réglé pour les francophones. Je regarde une lettre que j'ai reçue le jour passé du ministre des Transports Palladini nous disant que la privatisation et le transfert aux municipalités n'auront aucune garantie sur l'effet de signalisation bilingue sur nos routes. Aujourd'hui on nous dit qu'avec ce projet de loi-là, ça va nous le garantir, mais on laisse beaucoup de points d'interrogation linguis-

tiques pour les minorités concernant les argents, les sommes qui ont été transférées aux conseils scolaires francophones en Ontario. Croyez-vous bien actuellement que le projet de loi 104 va nous garantir le financement par élève et aussi l'attrapage que nous regardons depuis nombre d'années, que les Franco-Ontariens n'ont pas reçus, la part équivalente de nos anglophones de la province? Croyez-vous qu'avec ce projet de loi-là, nous pouvons atteindre notre but?

M. Morin: Tel qu'on lit le projet de loi ce matin, il n'est pas passé, donc ces garanties n'existent pas. Tant que ce ne sera pas passé, fait et puis là on va pouvoir dire effectivement qu'elles sont là et qu'elles existent, on ne peut pas répondre à votre question aujourd'hui. Il n'y

a rien qui existe.

La Présidente : Merci, Madame Ladouceur, Monsieur Marin et Monsieur Lalonde d'avoir été avec nous ce matin.

### HASTINGS COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: The Hastings County Board of Education, Ernie Parsons. Welcome to our committee. Mr Parsons, I would ask you to introduce your co-presenter. You have 15 minutes within which to make your presentation, and

if time permits, we'll ask you some questions.

Mr Ernie Parsons: As you indicated, I'm Ernie Parsons, I'm chair of the Hastings County Board of Education. That and a remarkable resemblance to Robert Redford are really my only claims to fame. With me is Phil Ainsworth, who's our director of education. Given the current public attitude towards trustees, I find it wise not to travel alone in public.

Thank you for having us. It was difficult finding what we would say that you have not probably already heard, either today or in other locations. We're not going to talk about amalgamation. In the case of our board, the reality is that we're well along with the amalgamation with Prince Edward county. Please don't interpret it, though, that in any way I want that to indicate that I am in favour of all of the amalgamations in Ontario. But in the case of

ours, we will make it work.

I would like to talk about outsourcing. There is a sense certainly within education, and I think within the public, that there are problems within the education system, and often they are attributed to the teachers and to the unionized and to the non-unionized employees. In our case, our unionized employees are represented by CUPE, plus we have out-of-classroom non-unionized employees, and quite frankly they have been superb to work with. They have been cooperative. They have consistently over the years gone above and beyond the call of duty, and the reality is that their pay is far below the provincial average, so our employees have done well.

Our request under Bill 104 is to leave us alone where we have something that is working well, where we have dedicated, committed employees. Please recognize that. They are living in cold, raw fear now of their ability to provide for their own families because of the possibilities

of what could happen.

I know that the proposed legislation indicates that it is not mandatory but is to be encouraged. We ask that it be

fair, and not that boards can continue to have their own employees but that we be funded at \$7 an hour for them. If we're going to have the ability to retain them, please recognize their worth and fund it at that level. I have a sense, hearing other presentations, that there's a variation across the province, but in our case we very much appreciate our employees.

The issue of the number of trustees concerns our board. We have some sense, almost, that this legislation was drafted in anger. When we compare the treatment towards the trustees and contrast that with the treatment towards the municipal councillors, we see a marked

difference.

In the merged boards, the numbers currently are for us three francophone, one native and 31 English trustees. Now that may seem like a huge number, but if that were compared with the number of municipal councillors within the same jurisdiction, it would pale. We recognize that there may need to be a reduction, but it is important that the public continues to have access to people who can make decisions for them.

In my community, I have parents, I have non-parents, I have students literally coming in my driveway and wanting to talk to me. Many of the issues that are extremely humongous to them are issues that can be resolved locally. They need to have continued access to people who can help them with their concerns. As the number of trustees is reduced — and I guess as an engineer, where one has to have logic for each number, we do not understand the magic number 12. Why was 12 picked? Why not 14? Why not eight?

In the area that we represent, the second-longest county in the province, the number of trustees is critical. The rural voters, the voters in North Hastings, will effectively be disfranchised if they require an hour's drive to talk to a trustee, so we ask for some flexibility in those numbers.

Our last concern to share with you is the honorariums. That's a very delicate subject because it's perceived as the trustees once again feeding at the public trough. In our counties, trustees in one county earn approximately \$4,000 per annum — not getting terribly rich at that. In the other county, it's about \$8,000 per annum. We're asking you to put that into context that we have trustees driving an hour and a half each way to attend meetings.

The \$5,000 is another item that we feel was drafted with some anger or some revenge by someone. The honorariums are intended to compensate people for the costs incurred in serving in public office. On my board we have some individuals who, because of their background, are able to serve without a particular concern financially. But we have on our board, and I believe we're typical of rural Ontario, trustees who are gas bar attendants, who do not get paid, who forfeit their shift to attend a meeting. We have trustees who work in the bush cutting timber. These are not people who are wealthy. These are people who require some compensation for the hours and, even with the current compensation, probably lose some money on it.

Being a trustee, much more than a member of a township council, involves daytime activities. If we are going to represent the schools and represent the students, we need to be in the schools when the students are there,

so it requires substantial daytime commitments on the part of trustees.

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We're not looking to get rich. I don't think the majority of trustees in Ontario have received compensation that is out of line, but we would ask for some flexibility because it is important that we be able to continue to attract the independent business person, the farmer, the single parent. It is vital that we continue to draw a broad cross-section, and \$5,000 per annum, after a trustee pays taxes on that and pays for election expenses, which are not tax deductible, simply does not make it possible for much of Ontario to contribute to education. Indeed, probably the worst category that is being discriminated against are the young parents who are struggling to pay mortgages, to support their children. They will not be able to afford the costs involved in being a trustee and that is a group, above all, that should not be excluded.

Mrs Marland: Knowing as you do, I'm sure, that the Metro Toronto school board trustees get, I don't know,

\$48,000 or \$58,000, whatever it is - Mr Parsons: Yes, thousands.

Mrs Marland: Well, they get a huge amount. Because I think the points you make actually are very valuable to us to hear, and the examples that you have just given us, I'm wondering what you think would be a reasonable honorarium, knowing that your members so far have been getting \$4,000?

Mr Parsons: Trusteeship should not be a full-time job. We agree with the proposal on that. Our trustees currently in Prince Edward make about \$4,000 and in Hastings make about \$8,000. We have not only increased our honorarium over the past few years, but decreased it this year. I don't think \$10,000 or less is out of line, representing our area. I can't speak for all of Ontario and the travel time and the costs involved, and I don't know what's involved in northern Ontario, but in our area we believe the \$8,000 is fair.

Mrs Marland: So you're talking about being sure that trustees who serve are not out of pocket.

Mr Parsons: I believe that should be the purpose of it, to ensure that there is no financial loss to the trustees, not that there not be an income but that there not be a loss.

Mrs McLeod: I must begin my questioning by telling you that I'm really concerned that what we have with this bill is the beginning of the end of local decision-making in education and potentially the loss of school boards altogether. You've touched on a number of reasons why I think that will come to be, one being it's going to be harder for trustees to serve, harder to perhaps get people to run for boards. Given the larger geographic areas, trustees will also be less accessible and therefore I think will be seen to be serving less of a purpose in their local areas.

But the other one that I think you didn't touch on was that as the minister accompanies this with the move to control all educational funding, the trustee will essentially become a whipping post, a scapegoat for the ministry's funding decisions, with very little ability to be accountable at the local level. I guess I see that leading eventually to the dissolution of school boards, whether that is the current intention of the government or not. I just wonder

if you'd comment on how you see trustees being able to even carry out their role under this scenario.

Mr Parsons: I've learned years ago there's no use complaining to someone who doesn't have the power to bring about the change and this removes people from access to someone who can make change. I have phone calls at 11 o'clock on a Sunday night with concerns, and at the present time I can resolve them — not Sunday night generally.

But I fear that what this bill is in some sense is not an attack on education, because I think there are some things in there that have the potential for improvement; if anything, it's an attack on democracy. It is a loss of the local person's access to an elected official; not an overpaid elected official, an official who is their neighbour, who lives in their community and can provide a service for them.

Mr Wildman: I want to thank you for your forthright presentation and I want to agree with you that this is indeed an assault on democracy. It means significantly less local autonomy obviously and significantly less access to elected officials locally, and thus less local accountability and less representation in terms of the various communities in the wider area. It's centralizing decision-making and essentially decentralizing complaints. You'll become a complaint bureau. My question is, why would anybody want to run for trustee under these circumstances?

Mr Parsons: I've thought about that, because as a board chair, the lowest-paid municipal councillor in my community makes far more money than I. But I thought it over and thought, I'm not in it for money. I can't find a trustee in it for money. There are good people. The majority of people in Ontario are good people who want to see their children well educated.

Mr Wildman: I didn't mean in terms of money. I meant in terms of the decision-making, not having the

power to make decisions and make changes.

Mr Parsons: I know, and that's discouraging. But the pendulum swings and there are trustees who hope that if they run, there will be changes that recognize — any government that makes changes, some of them are good, but we need to recognize there is a potential for some things that are wrong. We'd like to be around and be in existence so that we can continue to lobby for and work for the changes that should happen.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We are all hopeful that good things will come. Thank you for being with us

today.

Mr Parsons: We have copies made of this.

The Chair: If you have copies, we'd appreciate — Mr Parsons: Yes, it pretty well wiped out our budget for the year.

The Chair: Thank you. If you could just give them to the clerk, we'll make sure that they are distributed. Thank you very much, gentlemen.

### TEACHERS' FEDERATION OF CARLETON

The Chair: May I ask the Teachers' Federation of Carleton to come forward: Doug Carter, Larry Capstick, Janet Fader, Donna Marie Kennedy and Rhena Charland.

Do we have enough chairs for everyone? All right, we do now. Welcome to our committee.

Mr Doug Carter: Thank you for the opportunity to share our views concerning Bill 104. We are five of the local presidents of the teachers' federations of the Ottawa-Carleton region and we frequently work together. All of us asked for time to appear before the committee this morning. Only my group was successful in being granted time and we agreed that we would share the time with each other.

I'm Doug Carter, president of the Teachers' Federation of Carleton. The TFC is comprised of more than 3,000 statutory members and occasional teacher members. With me today are Larry Capstick, president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, district 43, and he will be speaking to you in a moment; Janet Fader, president of the OSSTF, district 26, Ottawa; Donna Marie Kennedy, on my far right, who's president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, Carleton; and next to me on my right, Rhena Charland, president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, Ottawa.

We've been told by the minister on occasion that he wasn't terribly interested in listening to us because he saw that we were a special interest group. You're right; we are. Teachers' federations try to fulfil two roles, very much so the role where we safeguard and defend the welfare of our members as we establish it through collective bargaining. We've done that for years. But just as important, we have as a prime objective to also promote and defend the quality of education.

Historically, it's been the teachers of Ontario, through their federations, who have spoken out and lobbied for increased pre-service qualifications for teachers, better qualified teachers. It is the same teacher federations that have lobbied for improved learning conditions for children. Every one of us in the room today is a product of an education system and surely we will all agree that the aim of all of us is to further improve the system, because we know our way of life tomorrow depends on the education the children receive today.

Teacher federations are neither for nor against amalgamation of school boards. We said that to Brian Bourns, we've said that to many studies. But we do have concerns about Bill 104.

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The amalgamation of the boards in the Ottawa-Carleton region has been studied and reported on many times, the most recent being the Bourns study of a few years ago. The findings of all their studies have been consistent: There is no substantial cost saving to be made by amalgamation, nor is there any stated improvement to the quality of education which would be received by the students as a result of combining the boards.

We, as presidents in front of you, represent more than 7,000 teachers in this area. We recognize the prerogative of the government of the day to set the agenda. If the government discerns that it is prudent and expedient to reduce the number of school boards, we can accept that decision. We do want to be clear, however, about what is aimed at improving the quality of education received by children. Bill 104 has to do with centralizing power and

establishing financial control over education. Nothing will culminate in a higher level of student achievement; nothing will enhance that special student-teacher relationship that is so vital to learning.

Nearly 30 years ago, the previous Progressive Conservative government introduced legislation to bring about dramatic reform in the system of education when it consolidated the school boards of the day. That legislation contained the clearly defined rules for amalgamation of school boards. The rights and benefits of employees were safeguarded by ensuring successor rights until new collective agreements could be worked out. The 1969 amalgamation of school boards maintained traditions going back to the very beginnings of public education in this province.

A very special tradition — local responsibility for education — was maintained through locally elected school boards with the right to raise revenue through property taxes. Local trustees and their decisions remained accountable to the local ratepayer while the provincial level of government retained final responsibility and provided overall direction and financial support to ensure there was a provincial consistency. Bill 104 ignores that tradition. It grabs all the power to the provincial level of government.

We would recommend that Bill 104 be amended to guarantee job protection for all existing employees. It must include successor rights and make provision for a transition period which would clearly outline the time lines and conditions under which a new collective agreement will be negotiated. During this transitional period, employees should continue to work under the terms and conditions of their existing agreements.

Collective agreements have come to define much more than just salaries and benefits. They include provisions for things such as sick leave and other forms of compassionate leave. They contain provisions for staffing levels and transfer provisions. In a very real way, collective agreements have come to define the way schools operate. As recently as 1992 and 1994, in the instances of the Kirkland Lake and Timiskaming separate boards or the Middlesex and London public boards, there were specific regulations issued to provide for protection of employees in terms of collective agreements when those boards were joined.

This committee has heard from our provincial federations and received the Ontario Teachers' Federation's Principles for School Board Amalgamation. Instead of repeating them to you, I've attached them in appendix A and we will refer to them a bit later.

Mr Larry Capstick: I'd like to speak briefly for a moment about an aspect of Bill 104, which is the Education Improvement Commission. This group is comprised of a handful of unelected government employees and they will have an unbelievably broad range of authority. In fact, the authority of the EIC will supersede that of the elected Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

For the panel that's seated before you, each one of us has had to undergo rather rigorous scrutiny, both through our academic background leading up to our admission to the faculties of education, having completed undergraduate and graduate degrees, then having to complete a

bachelor's degree in education, and most of us with a master's degree in education; all this before we can stand in front of a child in an Ontario classroom.

The EIC, with none of these requirements, will be making decisions which have even more significant impact upon those very same students. We find this to be a very, very serious contradiction. The commission can recommend to the minister on any matter and the cabinet may enact by regulation any of the EIC's recommendations. There would be no debate by our MPPs, no appeal or redress of any kind to any of the commission's decisions. The commission not only would be able to make recommendations to the minister but will exert financial control over existing school boards. This control effectively suspends the boards' democratic authority and responsibilities.

Under Bill 104 it will be more difficult to identify local needs and to ensure adequate funding for programs to meet those needs. Certainly in the Ottawa-Carleton region that has been brought home on more than one occasion, where you are dealing with a fundamentally rural board, the Carleton board, and a fundamentally urban board, the Ottawa board, two boards with some

very different needs.

Given the definition of the classroom and non-classroom expenditures advocated by the ministry, we are not reassured that ministry educrats will recognize any of those local needs or even their very existence. According to the ministry-commissioned study by Ernst and Young, classroom expenses are those required for teachers, teacher aides and student supplies. Among the nonclassroom expenditures defined by the report are items such as principals, guidance counsellors, librarians, psychologists, speech pathologists, secretarial, custodial services and items such as heat and light. Under this definition, the ideal school could theoretically be a very dark, cold place, one that has an unsupported teacher and, in keeping with the minister's wishes, each child could have an inoperable computer because there would not be any electricity.

Mr Wildman: The bill has certainly generated more

heat than light.

Mr Capstick: Certainly my colleague Donna Marie Kennedy, from the Catholic federation, has a school in the west end of the city with over 30 portables and can't even run a video machine because there are no curtains on the windows at the moment, let alone worrying about whether we're going to have plug-ins for computers.

The teacher would be unsupervised and parents would not communicate with the school easily because there would not be any principal or even a telephone. In contrast, we believe the whole school is the classroom and every individual in it plays a key role in the educa-

tion of the child.

If the government cannot accept that premise, then how can we have faith that there will be recognition and provision of financial resources to meet the increased needs of inner city-schools or the distinct transportation needs of students attending rural schools, or the increased support necessary to continue the integration of specialneeds students into regular classrooms? Certainly you've heard a good deal of that this morning.

I would also comment on my colleague, Rhena Charland, from OECTA, Ottawa. Since we sit on the faculty of education committees at the University of Ottawa, we've actually suggested from time to time that a primary prerequisite for a new teacher now is how to cook hot dogs, since so much of their time is spent arranging hot dog days in order to buy supplies.

Another major concern of ours is the seeming determination to move towards the outsourcing or privatization of non-instructional services. Parents and students can tell you how important it is to have custodial staff who are full-time, permanent members of the school community. As their work takes them throughout the school and outside the building, it is often they who are the first to identify and challenge trespassers and intruders. It is our belief that to replace existing employees with low-wage, casual employees is penny wise and pound foolish.

Certainly in my board, my secondary panel, on February 12 we took a snapshot within our schools and I had the various groups that were mentioned earlier actually identify those things they did on that day, things such as teacher aides who toiletted and catheterized more than 214 students. If those people aren't there, who's going to toilet and catheterize those 214 students? Custodial maintenance who challenged nine non-known members of the community as trespassers at various school sites on that day; school psychologists and other workers who dealt with agencies such as the children's aid on a variety of issues. It was a litany of items on one day of no particular significance, it just happened to be February 12, and it provided a most enlightening snapshot view of what is actually going on in any school on a given day, and these members are all part of our school community.

We've attempted to highlight our concerns about Bill 104. It's a disturbing proposal because of its broad range of powers assigned to the Education Improvement Commission and the cabinet. There are no assurances that there will be open and full consultation on issues related to establishing district school boards, and the legislation removes some accountability measures which traditionally function to protect our democratic rights. We and the members we represent have grave concerns about the impact which educational finance reform and school board restructuring will have on Ontario's tradition of local government and accountability and on the quality of education, an equitable education for all.

The government has failed to provide sufficient rationale to justify the scale of its proposed changes to education finance and education governance. We remain to be convinced that our students will benefit from any of these

proposed changes.

1250

Mr Carter: In fact, we urge that Bill 104 be withdrawn and completely reworked, but realizing that's not likely, we suggest that the following amendments are imperative if it's to have any hope of gaining its objectives:

School boards must maintain some taxing authority so that they remain viable governing entities with the ability to respond to local education needs.

Employees of existing school boards must be assured

of job protection in any new district school board.

The legal status of existing collective agreements be recognized during the transition period until new collective agreements are negotiated.

District school boards should be obliged to accept the liability for salaries and benefits of employees transferring to the new legal entity, the district school board.

The attached OTF Principles for School Board Amal-

gamation should be incorporated into the act.

The mandate for the EIC should not include any reference to outsourcing of non-instructional services.

Recommendations of the EIC should be subject to debate in the Legislature prior to any implementation.

School Board employees should be considered as full partners in any local advisory committees that are set up by the EIC that are going to discuss the transition to the new district school boards.

The Chair: Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. You've used up all of your time. We thank you for the positions you've put before us today.

Mr Carter: I guess we're not going to find out if anything is going to change one comma even in the bill.

Mr Patten: Come to the clause-by-clause.

**The Chair:** There will be clause-by-clause reading of the bill later on, next month.

Mr Patten: See if they're listening.

Mrs McLeod: It's important, though, that the government has chosen to allow only one day for the clause-by-clause amendment process and only the latter part of an afternoon for third reading debate on this bill.

Mr Wildman: And only one hour for committee of the

whole

**The Chair:** For your information, the day for clause-by-clause is March 26. Thank you very much for appearing here today.

### OTTAWA-CARLETON BOARD OF TRADE

**The Chair:** The Ottawa-Carleton Board of Trade, Willy Bagnell. Welcome, Mr Bagnell. We're pleased to have you with us this afternoon.

Mr Willy Bagnell: Good afternoon. By this time you'd probably like to go to lunch, but stick with me for

The Chair: No, you take your full allotted time.

**Mr Bagnell:** For those of you who aren't from God's country here in the national capital region, welcome. We apologize for our weather, but we understand, in the spirit of equity, that Toronto got its fair share too.

I hope you're enjoying this St Patrick's Day. This is a special day for us, on the eve of the commencement of the board of trade's 140th annual general meeting and the

start of our 140th anniversary.

We're pleased to share our views on amalgamation of school boards in the province of Ontario. Bill 104 deals with many aspects of education in our province and sets the tone for governance of our school boards in Ontario.

For over 20 years now, the Ottawa-Carleton Board of Trade has called for school board amalgamation in our region. Prior to Bill 104, Ottawa-Carleton carried the burden of six school boards. The legislation calls for two school boards exclusive to our region, one public and one separate. We are pleased with this amalgamation and we

know it will direct more funds towards educating all our children.

For many years we watched the education system locally devolve into six separate and distinct organizations which created inefficiencies and inconsistencies in educating our children. The board of trade questions whether this was in the best interests of our children, particularly in preparing them for a complex society as adults. Business in our region has complained for many years that students graduating from our local high schools are not as competent in the basics as they were 20 years ago. We believe that Bill 104 is part of a larger solution to this problem.

The board of trade has been very vocal on this issue with all governments over the past two decades. We do not believe in multilayered systems which can be argued are designed to enhance the powers of education trustees. This amalgamation is just one step towards better educa-

tion for all in Ottawa-Carleton.

The reduction of compensation for school board trustees and the reduction of their numbers is also a positive step. Our belief is that school board trustees' positions are part-time positions that should be filled by a broad range of citizens who represent the diversity of a community. The role of a trustee is policy development and approval, budget monitoring and governance; it is not management, it is not operations and it is not transportation. These items are best left to specialists who are trained and skilled in these areas.

Before Bill 104, we witnessed school boards' move away from governance and policy to involvement in day-to-day management issues. We believe this is due in large part to the fact that the trustees are mostly now full-time individuals who view this position as a job; a job they won by being elected, not necessarily by having any background, training, skills or credentials in education.

We also believe that by reducing the compensation for trustees to a much lower level, you encourage a broader range of people to consider making a community contribution by pursuing election to their local school board. This position is consistent with our views on local government elected officials, who we believe should be part-time and compensated at a much lower level than they are today. The philosophy is quite simple: The money we pay in taxes for education should go to educating our children, not to large salaries or stipends for trustees.

Finally, there is no magic in the number of trustees. Conventional wisdom dictates that boards of directors or boards of trustees or governors of more than 15 to 18 become ineffective because they are too large. We applaud the government for taking this fact into account and reducing the number of trustees.

In conclusion, the points we have just made support with great fervour the spirit and goals of Bill 104: better education for our children in Ontario.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Bagnell. We

have three minutes per caucus.

Mr Patten: Good afternoon, Willy. It's always good to see you. Willy, there is one assertion you made here, on page 2, "We are pleased with this amalgamation and

we know it will direct more funds towards educating all our children." What do you base that on?

Mr Bagnell: If you remember the report produced by Len Potechin and Des Cunningham a number of years ago, it isolated a number of situations where the six boards were not combining administrative efficiencies in terms of transportation, information technology, human resource sourcing and payroll and the list goes on and on. They had isolated some 20 areas. The estimates are, for what is a multibillion-dollar expenditure in Ottawa-Carleton, that the savings there could be directed back into education.

Mr Patten: I would have a great deal of sympathy with that statement, and I would assume there are some savings to be made in the various administrations. If the savings were to be put back to support a teacher or a classroom in terms of educational quality, then I would be very sympathetic and I think a lot of people too. The worry is that the savings that are identified will be taken out of education totally because the minister says he's still looking for another billion dollars.

Some people are saying that this is really the framework and a series of doors that will allow centralized control for the province, to now not give back as much money to education as it has in the past, and therefore the net loss to education is quite astounding, somewhere in the neighbourhood of perhaps \$1.5 billion to maybe even \$2 billion. If that happened, would you be pleased with that?

Mr Bagnell: First of all, I don't think there's any definitive anecdotal, analytical or any other type of evidence to say that. One of the things I've been pretty good at, Richard, and I think all your colleagues know, is getting myself in trouble for commenting on speculation. I will say that in my conversations with the honourable minister he has displayed no evidence of trying to cut the amount of money that goes to children in the classroom.

I also don't believe for a second that what we're doing here is a step towards worsening the quality of our education. I think what we're doing is cleaning up a mess that's been around for two decades.

Mr Patten: Your assumption is still that the money stays in education. I think you'll find that that's not the case.

Secondly, what's the view of your members in finding that the pressure on business tax for education is probably going to be increasing as they have to pick up some of the downloading to municipalities as the property tax educational amounts have been removed?

Mr Bagnell: I can tell you that the pressure on the business community regarding property tax, and the subsequent removal of education from that, has been greeted by the business community with much glee. At the same time, we are also working with our provincial officials and local government officials to determine an accurate number. We have a report from the regional chair that says the downloading or exchange of services is going to cost the taxpayers here \$150 million. Two weeks later a report came out from the local CAOs of 10 cities that said it's going to be \$60 million. I tend to have a bit of a problem with a \$90-million variance. I'm a country boy, and \$90 million is a lot of money to me.

1300

The board has undertaken to do an independent financial analysis upon receipt of the figures relevant to Ottawa-Carleton from the Treasurer's office. We have retained a number of our members on a volunteer basis, lawyers and accountants who specialize in this, and we will be producing a report that gives what the actual amount is, the cost to taxpayers in Ottawa-Carleton. We'll be soliciting people from both sides of the House to comment on it.

Mr Wildman: Obviously the minister's definition of what is in classroom and what is out of is crucial to determining whether or not kids' achievement is going to benefit from it. I'd like to deal specifically with the figures, and I'll use the minister's figures, so we're not speculating. The minister says the total expenditure on education in Ontario is approximately \$13.5 billion annually. He says that Bill 104 will save \$150 million in terms of lowering the number of trustees from about 1,900 to about 700 or 800. That's a little over a 1% savings. Those are his figures. The \$150 million is a lot of money, but it's only 1%, or a little more than that, of the total bill. He has removed \$5.4 billion from the residential property tax, but the commercial and industrial still will be going to education.

I would suggest to you, and I'd like your comment, that what Bill 104 is really about is taking control of education and educational expenditures away from locally elected boards and concentrating it in the minister's own hands so that he can get a substantial amount of money out of Ottawa and Toronto, which may or may not benefit other boards in other parts of the province. The way to do that is not to return the full \$5.4 billion in terms of grants but to cut that amount substantially when the new granting formula is determined. Would you be in support of that kind of redistribution of funds out of Ottawa to other parts of the province if that is what is determined?

Mr Bagnell: I can't answer that question because, as I stated to your colleagues in the past, you're speculating. I can only answer that what has been published and what has been read into the record in the Legislature is not what you were stating in terms of the intent. I believe that is the intention of the education agenda that was clearly enunciated during the last election and has been moving forward: to clean it up and make it better for the kids and make it a system that everybody pays into, because presently that's not the case. The intention of the government on this matter has been pretty clearly stated.

As we have seen for the longest period of time now, those of us in the community that employs well in excess of 90% of the people in the province of Ontario, which is the private sector, believe that the education system needs to improve, because the quality of children in the public system today coming out as graduates is not what it was.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): Thank you for coming. As you know, no matter which government was in power, they'd be reducing school boards. Mrs McLeod talked about it in the red book; the former government under Dave Cooke, the minister, started doing that, they looked at it. No matter which govern-

ment was in power, they wanted to reduce school boards. As a matter of fact, across the country every province has reduced school boards. The cry from the public has come, "We want the school boards reduced, but we want more parental involvement." We're looking at that, strengthening the parent councils. Certainly in my community that has been the cry: "We want to be more involved. We want to have more accountability. We want to assist in those decision-making processes."

Two questions: Do you see that as a good idea? Could you give us some suggestions as to how we could strengthen the parent councils' role and how much they should be involved? Could you give us any suggestions

on that?

Mr Bagnell: I think the role of the parent councils is critical to the restructuring of how education is governed in our province. So much of what we have in each individual marketplace and the quality of education therein is determined by the employment needs and the general understanding of what's happening in society in that marketplace. As I think everyone sitting around the table today understands, Ottawa-Carleton's future is not based in producing automobiles, it is not based in manufacturing of hard steel products; it's based in producing little microchips that drive your telephone system, it's based in producing pieces of software at Corel or Cognos that are selling all over the world. It's also based in bringing 5.5 million or more visitors to this region every year in the tourism and hospitality industries.

I think parents in this community who are employed by those understand that. I think there's got to be some consideration given to that side of it and understanding that parents should have a say in their kids' education, because ultimately, at the end of the day, the parents are the ones who are responsible until the child grows up and becomes a full-fledged member of society as an adult, which is very challenging today. For most of us who grew up in the 1950s and 1960s, when computers were something that IBM had in a huge garage somewhere and there was one TV station and it was glued on CBC on Saturday night for the hockey game, society is a different place today and we need to recognize that.

For the most part, the business community has said from day one, for the last 20 years, that recognition has not been keeping pace with what's evolving in business and society. I would hope the parent councils will take that into consideration and be given some specific say over what happens in their schools, because their schools

are community assets.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr Bagnell, for coming here today and for taking the time to present your views and answer the committee's questions.

### CARLETON ASSEMBLY OF SCHOOL COUNCILS

The Chair: I call upon the Carleton Assembly of School Councils; Carol Nixon. Welcome. We're pleased to have you here.

Ms Carol Nixon: I plan to take full advantage.

Madam Chair and members of the committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to address you today.

My name is Carol Nixon and I represent the Carleton Assembly of School Councils. For over 20 years, the board-wide Carleton assembly has served the former parent-school associations and now the 83 school councils of the Carleton Board of Education. I am also the mother of four children, three of whom attend Castor Valley Elementary School in the Carleton board. The youngest is in her second year of private nursery school due to the elimination of junior kindergarten in this area.

Bill 104 is one strategic piece in an extensive plan and I use the word optimistically - for the reform of education in Ontario. Many aspects of the plan are familiar from the Royal Commission on Learning, and vet, despite the apparent congruence between the recommendations of the royal commission and this government's education reforms, Gerald Caplan, co-chair of the Royal Commission on Learning, spoke with great concern about the government's plan for reform earlier in Ottawa this month. He said that the government needs to be convinced to slow down and back up. He said that amalgamation is unnecessary and diverts attention from helping kids. He said that the Education Improvement Commission has no accountability to the people of Ontario. Gerald Caplan thinks the government's education reform package is all about saving money.

As parents and as ratepayers, we understand and support the need for efficiency. But we also believe that every child in Ontario deserves to receive a world-class education, and that is the standard to which we intend to hold our government. Here in Carleton kids come first, and everything I will say today is rooted in this funda-

mental value.

In considering Bill 104 I am first struck by the short title, the Fewer School Boards Act. The stated purpose of the act is indeed to permit the transition to a new system of governance under which there will be fewer school boards. Why? Will fewer school boards cost less money or be more effective? There is a generally held view that the optimum size for school boards is 50,000 students. Much smaller or larger than this and economies of scale are not achieved. Based on their research, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education has warned that school boards with more than 40,000 students are in danger of losing their connection to the community. But generally there is a dearth of empirical evidence to support the conclusion that 40,000, 50,000 or any other magic number represents the optimum-sized school board.

The Royal Commission on Learning states in its report, "There is no formula, nor do there seem to be any objective criteria, that would allow us to conclude that there are too many school boards in Ontario." Why would the government of Ontario set about reducing the number of school boards without empirical evidence that fewer school boards will in fact be cheaper or more effective?

We suggest that Bill 104 be titled the Optimum School Boards Act and that the government conduct research to determine what is the best-sized school board, given the range of circumstances, both in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. Only then will the government be ready to decide which, if any, school boards should be amalgamated.

In the Carleton Board of Education, the costs of administration amount to only 3.3% of the total budget. Over 90% of the budget is spent in schools, with over 72% of the total going to teachers' salaries. The presumed savings from amalgamation will derive from the 3.3% administration figure and will be small compared to the cost of harmonizing salaries and benefits. There is an additional one-time cost of amalgamating school boards which, in the case of Ottawa-Carleton, was estimated in 1993 by government fact-finder Brian Bourns at between \$3.5 million and \$6 million. This figure excluded instruction-related computer costs and assumed that provincial funding levels would be maintained, changes to legislation would be made to control labour costs, and boards would be given five years to shift programs. None of these conditions is now in place.

Moreover, the upheaval of amalgamating our two large school systems with a combined population of 80,000 students, each with its own unique history and culture, will be enormous and is sure to be felt for years to come. I have seen it for myself, even at this very preliminary stage of the process. Decisions affecting education are being deferred. People throughout the system are worrying about losing their jobs and about changes to a system they value because it meets the particular needs of their students. Staff are busy meeting with their counterparts, studying each other's systems, and identifying issues for amalgamation. The very superintendents of educational services in both Ottawa and Carleton are the main

architects of the amalgamation process.

The greatest cost of the disruption to our education system will be to the consumers, our children. The school councils of Carleton require compelling evidence that the wholesale amalgamation of school boards is justified, both in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

There may be greater savings to be had in the alternative of cooperative ventures between school boards. Parents have been greatly frustrated by the modest progress of school boards in these initiatives and we would welcome the provincial government's intervention in mandating things like cooperative busing and purchasing consortiums. We are cautiously interested in the idea of outsourcing non-instructional services such as transportation, bearing in mind that kids come first. It is important that the quality of services be maintained and that the safety of our children not be compromised by strangers at work in the schools. In a word, we urge the government to make outcomes-based decisions. The expected outcome is a world-class education, efficiently delivered, to every child in Ontario.

Bill 104 also establishes the Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system of education governance. The commission is given extensive powers under Bill 104 to oversee the transition process, coordinate election processes, approve or amend the 1997 budgets of school boards and make recommendations to the minister in a number of areas such as autopricing.

We object to the fact that the decisions made by the Education Improvement Commission are exempt from review. We object to the fact that the decisions of our elected representatives are subject to the approval of an appointed commission under Bill 104. Finally, we object to the inappropriate name of the Education Improvement Commission and suggest instead that it be called the Transition to Amalgamation Commission.

Bill 104 provides for regulations that determine the number of trustees, the procedures for their nomination and election and the reasons for disqualification from election. The Carleton assembly supports the disqualification from election of people employed by school boards and the spouses of people employed by school boards. While the act does not state that the number of trustees will be reduced, we can assume that this will be the case from the specified range of five to 22 for each district board, and the minister has certainly made clear his intention to reduce the number of trustees, as well as their salaries.

In Carleton trustees are paid the relatively modest amount of \$17,000 each year for a demanding and difficult job as advocates for quality, cost-efficient education. We think that our trustees are a bargain. They are readily accessible to their constituents, night or day, across a board spanning 2,700 square kilometres, and they care passionately about the education of our children. Returning to our outcomes-based model of decision-making, will reduced political representation save significant amounts of money or improve education? We think not.

You have by now spent many days listening to the people of Ontario speak about Bill 104. 1 remember observing the Paroian hearings on Bill 100 in Ottawa this fall and Mr Paroian's dismay at how few new ideas he had heard. I have a new idea for you today, one not of my own design but of a fellow parent from the Ottawa Roman Catholic Separate School Board, Anne Plante-Perkins. She proposes a new model for the election of trustees, one meant to address the problem of the general electorate's poor knowledge of candidates and the problem of recruiting suitable candidates, which we expect will occur if the number and salary of trustees are reduced.

My friend Anne proposes that the current method of electing trustees be abolished altogether and replaced with a convention format. She further proposes that geographical groupings of school councils be invited to nominate one candidate for trustee from among the group of school councils or their community at large. The nominated candidates would then be grouped by representative areas or sectors. Each school council would send voting delegates to the convention, based on their school population. Delegates would vote for trustee candidates in all sectors of the district school board, thereby encouraging delegates to become familiar with all the candidates and candidates to gain an overview of the needs of the entire board.

At the end of the one-day convention, the district school board would have its elected trustees, the cost of the convention would be considerably less than that of cobbling trustee elections on to the municipal election process, and candidates would have come from the grassroots level of the education system: the school councils. The voters in this scenario would be informed and committed. So there you have it, a brand-new idea, and I suggest one worth considering.

We are greatly interested in Bill 104 as it pertains to the role of school councils and the increased involvement of parents in governance. I am a champion of the role of school councils. In Carleton school councils have seized the day. We are advising on the selection of principals, providing feedback to the government on the proposed reforms, advising on school and board budgets, helping to craft effective codes of student behaviour, providing advice to our board on its policies and procedures, participating on staff working groups and board committees, and supporting schools through our fund-raising and volunteer help.

In their first year, two thirds of our school councils believe their composition reflects that of the community and report that their council is functioning at the highest level, while another one third say that their council is operating smoothly. We are proud of the accomplishments of our school councils, and we are proud of our board's support of parents as an integral part of our

schools' management teams.

We believe that our umbrella organization, with its 20-year history of parent advocacy, is key to the success of school councils in Carleton. The Carleton assembly acts as the central conduit for information and advice between the Carleton board and its school councils. We meet the needs of our members by providing information and training, facilitating the exchange of ideas, coordinating the advice of individual school councils on broad issues and promoting the direct participation of parents in board decision-making. We take pride in our autonomy and ability to criticize when necessary, while still maintaining a strong working relationship with our board.

I know this committee is very interested in ways to increase the effectiveness of school councils. We strongly recommend that parent umbrella organizations like those that exist in all six school boards in Ottawa-Carleton, and in North York, be encouraged to exist in all school boards across Ontario. This is another gem of an idea to

take back with you to Toronto.

But make no mistake about it: School councils are no substitute for school boards, or trustees, or parents working with kids in schools and at home. We are volunteers, with different abilities, different life circumstances and various amounts of time to offer. For these reasons our contributions and willingness to participate are bound to be uneven across boards and across the province. The government must be discouraged from building a system of education that is dependent on the success of school councils. We are a great enhancement to education and should be encouraged and supported to achieve our full potential. However, the education system must be built on a strong base of professional educators, adequate resources and political accountability.

Madam Chair and committee members, the government must go back to the drawing-board on Bill 104. The government must decide, on the basis of empirical evidence, whether Ontario's school boards will in fact benefit from amalgamation, both in terms of their cost-effectiveness and ability to serve children. The government must respect the people's need for local political accountability in education. The government must respect

the principles of democracy. The government must better understand both the potential and the limitations of school councils. And the government must continually focus on one all-important outcome: a world-class education, efficiently delivered, to every child in Ontario.

On behalf of the school councils of Carleton, thank

you for hearing me today.

The Acting Chair (Mr Richard Patten): Thank you very much, Ms Nixon, for your presentation. Unfortunately, you've used up all your time and there is none left for questions. Thank you very much for coming this afternoon.

### ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' FEDERATION, DISTRICT 18

The Acting Chair: I call Mr Manning, of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. Welcome.

Mr Brian Manning: Good afternoon. My name is Brian Manning, and I'm president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, district 18, Peter-

borough.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee on this very important matter of Bill 104. I was notified that I'd been granted standing by a telephone call from the Legislature on the afternoon of the last day of classes prior to the March break. Today is the first school day following the March break. The timing has made it impossible to coordinate a joint presentation with other interested parties from Peterborough, but I assure you there is a great deal of interest in Bill 104 in my community.

Peterborough county has about 120,000 residents. It's served by two boards: the separate board, which serves the counties of Peterborough, Victoria, and Northumberland and Clarington; and the Peterborough County Board of Education, which is the public entity. The government proposes to amalgamate the latter with the Northumber-

land and Clarington Board of Education.

Typically, politicians elected from Peterborough to the provincial or federal government are members of the governing party. Peterborough MPP Gary Stewart and Hastings-Peterborough MPP Harry Danford are members of the government caucus. In that respect, Peterborough is a barometer of opinion across Ontario and the nation.

I represent an organization of 500 public secondary school teachers. We are extremely concerned with the direction being proposed by the government in this bill. That concern, as our MPPs can attest, has manifested itself in an unprecedented number of letters, faxes and phone calls to constituency offices, as well as public demonstrations, petitions and letters to the editor.

We are not alone. School council members, parents, students and taxpayers are asking questions and expressing frustration that their questions are not being answered in any meaningful way. Local newspapers have run a number of articles and editorials addressing education restructuring recently and local radio and television are also reporting it. There appears to be an increasing awareness that something significant and not necessarily good is happening to our school system.

In these few minutes, I cannot deal thoroughly with all that worries us about Bill 104. I can echo some of the

comments that were made earlier today. Particularly, I think the Hastings County Board of Education representatives could speak very well on issues that apply to the Peterborough County Board of Education. I will emphasize a few points.

Savings through amalgamation: The Minister of Education has declared that \$150 million can be saved by amalgamation. He bases this statement on the study by Ernst and Young, who say of the data on which they based their study, "We did not verify the accuracy or completeness of this data and render no opinion on it." Are we proceeding with a massive restructuring of the education system based on data whose completeness and accuracy have not been verified?

The same study states that per pupil expenditures vary across the province from \$4,723 to \$9,148, while the provincial median is \$6,359 per pupil. The Peterborough County Board of Education spent only \$5,981 per pupil in 1996, significantly less than the provincial median. What is the likelihood that significant savings can be found in amalgamating this board with its southern neighbour?

If there really is money to be saved through amalgamation, how much is it? Precisely where and through what process will these savings be found? What will be done with the resulting savings? Will this provide for an enhancement of educational opportunities for the students or merely a reduction of expenditure by the government?

If the government uses amalgamation as a pretext for reducing expenditures, will the cut be \$150 million or will it be closer to the \$1 billion that the minister has repeatedly mused about?

Regarding the Education Improvement Commission, the proposed EIC is an appointed panel with unprecedented powers for a peacetime body. Its mandate exceeds that of the elected government, enduring through one provincial and two municipal elections. It's accountable only to the Minister of Education and Training, not to the Legislature. It's above the law and beyond the reach of the courts. Furthermore, it's empowered to appoint committees to act locally in its name. Critical decisions about the restructuring of one of the largest and most important institutions in Ontario, our education system, will be made by those who are appointed by a body of others who are also appointed, all of whom are above the law and not accountable to the electorate.

Representatives of this government have frequently and loudly proclaimed that there must be more accountability. Now we have the proposed EIC, which is anything but accountable.

I refer to the "proposed EIC," perhaps in error. Since the nominal co-chairs of the commission, Mr Cooke and Ms Vanstone, are already receiving salaries of \$88,000 annually and the government has interviewed candidates for a chief executive officer of the commission at \$123,000 per year, perhaps it is more than just a proposal. I wonder how much the operations of the EIC will end up costing the taxpayers, to whom they are not accountable.

Apparently, the government is going ahead with the EIC even before Bill 104 is passed into law. That being the case, what is the purpose of these hearings? This

seems like a lot of trouble and expense to incur simply so the government can claim to have sought public input on a bill they intend to pass regardless of what is said here.

On redefining the classroom, no single issue has received as much attention or raised as much furore among teachers and parents in Peterborough as the ministry's definition of what is inside the classroom and what is not. The direction given by the ministry to Ernst and Young was to count library, guidance, preparation time, custodial, maintenance, in-school administration and board administration expenditures as outside-the-classroom expenditures.

Nothing has inspired more doubt about the ministry's understanding of the school system than the suggestion that heat, light and custodial services are not direct classroom spending. Teacher librarians teach; they don't simply dust bookshelves. To suggest that the service they provide is outside the classroom ignores the fact that whole classes migrate to the library to be taught by these experts in how to conduct research and compile reports.

Administration is responsible for the academic and financial recordkeeping that is essential if the system is to continue to be accountable to the parents, the taxpayers and the ministry. Yet all of these areas have been identified by the Ministry of Education as somehow being representative of waste in the school system.

Bill 104 mandates the EIC to promote and facilitate the outsourcing of non-instructional services. In making this proposal, has the government considered the possible effects of contracting out school services? Parents and educational workers are concerned that there could be a loss of control over who is employed to work in the schools and the endangerment of young children that could be the result. With outsourcing, will our schools be as clean and safe, as supportive of students, as accountable and efficient as they now are?

Regarding collective agreements, recently Alberta went through an amalgamation of school boards. I understand that in the legislation and regulations covering the transition it was stipulated that existing collective agreements would continue in force until agreements could be struck between the new entities. The same can be said of the Ontario school board amalgamation in the late 1960s. Also, protocols were established in the regulations for reaching those agreements.

In contrast, Bill 104 offers no guarantees to educational employees. Much is left to the EIC to decide and implement. This has resulted in a high level of uncertainty among employees.

How does the government expect that the thousands of issues involved in the merger of collective agreements will be resolved? Why has no protocol been established for this process, as was done in other school board amalgamations? Has this issue been explored in detail by the government or was Bill 104 tabled without first thinking about the implications for collective bargaining?

In order for the public to have faith in the competence of the government, there has to be more of a definitive response to these questions than simply leaving it to the EIC to work out.

Mr Snobelen, at the opening of the Bill 104 hearings in Toronto, said, "We are now ready to move forward in Ontario." The implication is that the government has some clear vision of where we are going. We ask that the specifics of this vision be shared with Ontarians before

going ahead with a massive restructuring.

Bill 104 purports to be about governance but appears to have been designed primarily to allow the government to cut spending and replace the current system with publicly funded private schools. What will the new school system look like? Will it consist of private institutions providing education for profit, to complement the prison for profit and health care for profit models being put forward by other ministries? Will it continue to provide the universal access, accountability, comprehensive curriculum and high standards of the current system? Will educators from around the world continue to come to Ontario to examine and admire our education system as they do now?

It is incumbent upon the government to demonstrate that the proposed restructuring will in fact provide a better system, a better-educated populace, a more competitive Ontario; in short, improvements, not merely changes. We recommend that Bill 104 be withdrawn until such time as the government has clearly delineated for the public where it wants to take the education system and how it proposes to get there. Ontarians want governments to employ good sense, not just common sense.

1330

Mr Wildman: It's been suggested by one of the other presenters that we've spent many days listening to presentations and that we may have heard a number of these points before. I would point out we haven't spent many days — the government limited the number of days to four days in Toronto and six days outside — but we have heard a number of comments that have had matters in common: questions around the powers of the EIC, for instance, which you raise.

I'd like to ask a more general question. It's been suggested there's nothing in this Bill 104 that improves the quality of education for students, and yet we have the Premier of the province on television advertising, saying that the government wants to put students at the head of the class. You've said you need to have some vision, which I think is important, obviously, but do you see anything in this bill that will in fact improve the quality of education for students and put them at the head of the

class?

Mr Manning: I don't see any evidence to back up an assertion that anything in the bill will improve quality of education for students or educational opportunities for the population generally. I've heard assertions that it's going to prove an improvement in that area, but there's no evidence to back those assertions up.

Mr Wildman: Your concern about the definition of classroom expenditures and the exclusion of principals, vice-principals, teacher-librarians, guidance, as well as custodial, clerical and so on: How would you define education that assists a student in achieving his or her potential? Obviously there must be some division between what is directly related to the student's achievement in education and what is not. How would you define it?

Mr Manning: The classroom is not the four walls the student sits in while he's lectured to by a teacher. The

classroom is the educational institution, its environment, its community, the province, Canada, the world. The classroom is more than just what's in those four walls and you have to be able to access it. In order to access it, you have to have resources and you have to have personnel.

The whole idea of defining a narrow definition of what the classroom is seems to me just a way of setting up an area which is not a classroom and can therefore be cut. It's simply to set up an opportunity for savings. That's

the way it reads.

Mr Skarica: Sir, you referred to the Ernst and Young report and you quoted from the report. I'll quote from it, "We did not verify the accuracy or completeness of this data and render no opinion on it." But I wonder if I could read the two sentences prior to that statement: "The ministry's estimate of savings is based on the budgeted costs for 1996 as submitted by the school boards. In completing our review, we relied on the cost data provided to the ministry by the boards and summarized in a report on school board spending 1995-96."

Surely you're not suggesting we can't rely on the cost figures given to us by the school boards themselves.

Mr Manning: Indeed I am. Sir, it isn't that the school boards intentionally misled the ministry with the data that were provided, but the parameters they were given for the data they were to provide were not explicit enough, and as a result different boards interpreted those data in different ways and submitted figures that had different meanings. The minister has chosen to use the data submitted, and Ernst and Young directed to use the data submitted, as if they were reliable and accurate. Hence their statement that they render no opinion on it; they haven't verified it.

Mr Skarica: The savings according to Ernst and Young would be in the neighbourhood of \$150 million. By my calculations, you could hire 5,000 teachers with that money. Surely 5,000 new teachers would help to lower the teacher-student ratio and improve education in the province.

Mr Manning: I can't disagree with you there. I'd welcome the hiring of 5,000 new teachers; thank you.

Mrs McLeod: I also feel the need to put on record some of what the Ernst and Young report said. There are two reports. The particular one that you were citing also makes the statement that they do not believe, even with the data they've got, that they can identify or that the ministry knows what makes the costs in some boards higher than the costs in other boards, and that the ministry needs to essentially go back to the drawing board and understand the special needs that may exist that are beyond a board's control. I think if we're going to cite reports we need to be sure we're citing the total context of those reports.

I also want to take a minute of my time to thank you for making the effort to come today. The limitations that have been placed on the time we have for these hearings mean that we cannot in any way hear from the teachers, the trustees and the parents of the students from each of the boards that is going to be affected by this particular bill, and I think that is truly indefensible for changes of this magnitude.

It may seem odd to people that somebody from Peterborough would be here in Ottawa today making a presentation, but it was either here or Barrie for you. There was no convenient place for people from Peterborough to be heard.

Mr Manning: This was the only option.

Mrs McLeod: I just want to thank you for making that

If there's time for one quick question, you mentioned outsourcing, one of many issues of concern. There is a new proposal that is apparently being considered at the municipal table, not the education table, which would suggest that to help fix some of the mess of the offloading, they would have the municipalities pick up the cost of school custodial care, secretarial services, capital construction and busing. If there's time, I'd like you to comment on what that might do to the school community.

Mr Manning: I recently had an opportunity to hear the Peterborough county clerk and the clerk of the city of Peterborough comment on the net result of the megaweek announcements for taxpayers. The good news, they said, was the removal of the education tax. The bad news was some \$36 million of additional downloading in Peterborough county and the city of Peterborough. Now, if in addition we're going to put on the municipal taxpayer the costs of these services —

The Acting Chair: Mr Manning, thank you very much. Your time is up. We appreciate you coming all this way today to make your presentation.

### OTTAWA BOARD OF EDUCATION, SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Acting Chair: I'd like to call forward Patty Ann Hill and Linda Hunter, the special education advisory committee. Welcome, Ms Hill.

Patty Ann Hill: First of all, I want to explain we have a package that we have given every one of you and it backs up the information in my 10-minute speech, which is a summary of the information in my 25-minute speech.

The Acting Chair: You have 15 minutes, by the way. Patty Ann Hill: I know. That's why we've got the 10-minute version. I am presently the co-chair of the Ottawa board's special education advisory committee and I have been the chair for six years. Let me say how pleased I am to be speaking to all of you. This is a really special issue that is close to my heart, having had two children with special needs.

I wanted to advise you that the special education advisory committee is provincially mandated. We have to be there. My comments are representative of discussions held on Bill 104 at our March 6, 1997, SEAC meeting, and as I said there is an attachment listing our full range of programs and services.

I'm going to start with a wonderful quote: "Special education ensures that all children receive an education regardless of any exceptionalities or circumstances." I'd like to tell you that this is from the provincial government Web site on Internet, but it doesn't ensure anything.

There's no standardization in the way we service our special needs clients. Each board is different, whether it is because of political will or money or philosophy. Parents run from one board to the other, desperately

trying to get their children properly educated. The role of special education is to develop a child to his or her potential so they may become a productive member of society.

Before I go too far, I'll give you our recommendations and then I'll complete the rest of the conversation.

We came to the recommendation that we wanted to ask you to reconsider the amalgamation of the Ottawa-Carleton school boards specifically because of the negative impact on special needs for the children of the Ottawa board, and if an amalgamation, the complete two boards.

If you decide to pursue this objective, then these items have to be in place: a survey to identify needs throughout the province, the location of those needs and the availability of community services; and an agreed-upon provincial-wide model that meets the needs of the special students and their families, which includes not just special training for the classroom teacher, but all the supports necessary for each student to achieve his or her potential; we would like to have the inclusion of preventive programs.

Funding: We need to recognize different needs, a varying scale of funding based on student needs and including support resources. Our SEAC is willing to assist you in the development of the funding model rather than be limited to commenting on a Queen's Park funding proposal.

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The ministry should develop a province-wide model for integration. Along with a range of services that most of us provide, there seems to be no policy regarding integration. We want to identify and specify the number of special needs children and the specific size of class, with supports if necessary, and specific teacher training to ensure that all the students in the classroom receive a proper education.

The Ottawa Board of Education special education advisory committee feels very strongly that as a school system belonging to the Ottawa-Carleton area, we need to be there for all the children of this community. Not every child comes through the doors ready and able to learn. Some children have learning disabilities such as language difficulties, neurological damage, perceptual handicaps or physical handicaps, or their education has been interrupted because of family violence, death or suicide of friends, and poverty. Some of them are abused, emotionally, physically and sometimes sexually.

Our area is quite different from the Carleton board area. One of every seven children in the Ottawa-Carleton area lives in poverty. That equates to 24,000 children. Nearly 15,000 of these children live within the boundaries of the Ottawa Board of Education, as we have 90% of the social housing in the Ottawa-Carleton area, and the highest concentration is preschoolers and kindergarten children.

You can well understand our desire to commit to junior kindergarten. If you put the same amount of money into preventive services that you are going to put into each of the superjails, I guarantee, and research will support me, that you will have less crime, less violence, less suicides and you will have a more productive,

healthy, stable population that will be the envy of every province in Canada as well as elsewhere.

On the other hand, if the support for these services is not adequate, the students not receiving their supports as needed will be ready for the brand-new superjail, I would say in about three years, and then you're going to be paying \$40,000 to \$60,000 an inmate.

There is no point in providing inadequate funding and just warehousing these children. We cannot accept a lowering of standards to meet a certain funding model of which we know nothing. The children of this province are the future of this nation, and we need to make sure they are properly educated and cared for within this province.

All the people on this panel were given the best available education at the time. There seems to be a selfishness and an élitism pervading every level in this country. It's quite intriguing that the taxpayer out there will pay a small fortune for a private school, but scream at the slightest increase in education taxes. Senior citizens complain about education taxes, forgetting that the parents of today are contributing towards their pensions, and furthermore, that their children had a good education—elementary, secondary and post-secondary—at the taxpayers' expense.

I hear many young people with high salaries and high expectations complaining about the high taxes, as they live in their lovely homes and enjoy a standard of living that I could just dream about. They forget that it was my taxes, and my parents' taxes and my grandparents' taxes that subsidized their education, and it will be my grand-children's taxes that will pay for their heart transplants.

A public board of education is required to serve all students, regardless of ability, disability, race, religion and ethnocultural background. We cannot educate a child who has been emotionally abused, or can't talk, or can't hear or is developmentally delayed, without the proper support: social workers, psychologists, educational aides, occupational therapists and speech pathologists, and yes, even the expert to take care of the equipment are all part of the solution.

We have come to the determination that services, medical, educational and social are best handled within the educational model. As you know, as funds become less available for outside community services, the impact on the classroom is becoming critical. For instance, the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario shut down its mental services unit in November 1996 in order to see the children on the waiting list, some of whom have been waiting since 1995. This impacts on all boards of education.

Many of our parents moved into Ottawa from neighbouring boards. They moved from other cities and even other countries in order to access the services that are in the Ottawa Board of Education, specifically our special education and support services.

If a special education child is in a normal classroom without supports, he or she can be disruptive or violent or, on the other hand, just too quiet. If they are disruptive or violent, they are depriving the normal, average student of precious classroom teaching time, which is outright discrimination to the pupil needing the supports, but it is

also discriminatory to the average student in the class-room.

At this time we have a full complement of learningdisabled, immigrant, emotionally disturbed, autistic, severely handicapped, and we even have juvenile offenders throughout our schools. We have many more children with special needs, as we are an inner-city school board. Will the funding assure that every child throughout the vast region of this new board receives the services that are now operative in the Ottawa board? For instance, an autistic child requires an expenditure of \$40,000 per pupil. A child in the McHugh units can cost up to \$20,000. This is a real cost to boards and hence to taxpayers. We have to have reality-based funding for special needs. We cannot water down special education and support services in order to meet some of the needs of some of the children within the Ottawa and Carleton board area.

Our SEAC wants to stress the need for one ministry, or at least more integrated services between ministries, that handles all health, educational and social issues with regard to children. For instance, should the education system be paying for a firm to come in to check for pediculosis, otherwise known as head lice? Isn't this a health issue? The government itself has initiated the involvement of the health department with the inoculation of secondary students against hepatitis B. The testing for hearing and vision problems prior to school entry used to be done by the health department. Now they are no longer involved and we do not even have nurses.

In the past, and even now, school boards dumped exceptional children on other school boards, because the originating school board did not have either the facilities or the will to have a wide range of services. No allowance was made for the emotional effect on student and parents. There should be equity in this province based on student need.

We are going at this process backwards. First you need to define the student needs; second, you need to develop the programs to meet the needs; and finally, fund it properly.

Finally, our members are greatly concerned about the proposed structure in Bill 104 which puts the centre of power and the real decision-making process in Toronto. There is no accountability and no local representation. At this point in time access to SEAC, to central admin staff, as well as to trustees by parents is relatively easy within the existing boundaries of our board. Expansion of these boundaries as is planned with the coming amalgamation will inhibit this access, especially for those who depend on public transit and for those who live in the inner city.

We finish with a portion of a letter written by our integration action member Jane Naugler: "As a member for IAG, anything in Bill 104 which would narrow any parent's access to the representatives of the ministry and school boards will be of concern to us...certainly fewer trustees, centralized funding will have an affect on parents advocating for their children in difficult situations."

We want local access to decision-makers and input to educational issues that will affect our children. This is why we, as an association and as a SEAC, are concerned about Bill 104. Thank you.

Applause.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, please. In the interests of time I would ask you to refrain from clapping.

Mrs McLeod: I think you articulated one of my great concerns and that is that if we're actually going to have funding that is fair for students, it needs to be equity-based on students' needs and an understanding of students' needs. I was saying at the end of the last presentation that one very clear statement that was made in the ministry's own consultation study was that there is not yet that understanding of why there are factors beyond boards' control that drive costs up, like the numbers of special needs students.

What happens if what we get is a simplified grant system, which the ministry wants to move towards, where we would maybe have a flat rate for special education needs and an assumption that every board is going to have 5% to 10% of students with special ed needs? What

happens then to special education?

Patty Ann Hill: That would work fine for the small board that doesn't have the population the inner-city boards do. What would happen is the special ed services would be quite thin, because when you have one child at the \$40,000 level, that child could take a big percentage of the funding. So far we have been able to manage simply because we had our own property tax base etc, but with that type of funding you're not going to get the length and the breadth of services that you're going to need. That's our concern.

Mr Wildman: Thank you for an excellent presentation. I couldn't agree more with your view that you define student needs first, then develop programs appropriate and then determine how you're going to fund it

adequately.

Having said that, the minister has repeatedly indicated in the House and elsewhere that special education has not been hurt by the cuts that were made, the \$400 million in grant-dependent boards in 1995 and 1996, and will not hurt in the future, and yet you're suggesting that you should not be amalgamating boards or it's going to hurt the Ottawa board particularly as an inner-city board with significant needs. What's your reaction to the view, first, that special education has not been adversely affected by cuts to grant-dependent boards and, second, the effect that you anticipate in a board that up to now has not been dependent on grants, the Ottawa board?

Patty Ann Hill: The Ottawa board many times gets a bad rap. We're so rich, apparently. We have been able and we had the political will to fund and make sacrifices to have these children seen. There are always ways we can make things better. We're getting more and more of these children into the board. Our concern is that without the proper funding model we're not going to be able to

serve them to the best of our ability.

Further, many of us think that since we're going to reform the education of this province, this is a wonderful opportunity to really look at this problem from the point of view of just what kinds of children we have and how many children we have in these circumstances and just

really redo the whole funding model. You know, we have a wonderful opportunity here.

Mrs Marland: When you talk about redoing the whole funding model, would you be thinking about redoing the policy model as well?

Patty Ann Hill: Excuse me, the what model?

Mrs Marland: Policy in terms of children with special needs. Where I'm leading with this preamble is to the fact that no government has yet addressed the needs of children with special needs once they turn 21.

Patty Ann Hill: That's right.

Mrs Marland: I know that having asked the two previous governments to try to address the over-21-year-olds —

Mr Wildman: Your government cut adult education before ours did.

Mrs Marland: Our government has just announced \$15 million for adult children over 21 with special needs, so I would remind Mr Wildman of that.

But do you feel that in looking at the overall challenge of dealing with children with special needs, be they under or over 21, there needs to be some policy changes and some different ways, and could you give us some sugges-

tions about ways that might be addressed?

Patty Ann Hill: One of the things I see is that we as a society have to come to the conclusion that education just isn't reading, writing and arithmetic any more. It used to be, and it was simple. But it isn't simple, really. You've laid down the law and you've said to us, "You have to educate everybody." We get children into the system who aren't capable of moving a finger and you expect us to do all this out of education dollars. It's crazy.

What you should be doing is looking at a community. First of all, I think it all should be in the school system. All right? If you're going to have occupational therapists and all the rest of it, if you're going to have these children in the school, okay then, let's look at funding through health or through the ministry of social services. Let's look at funding everything that a child would need,

but do it within the educational system.

I'll give you for instance. We have the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario — I've given it to you in the paper — and they have said to us, "We've had to stop inputting all the children with emotional needs assessment because we have 600 to 700 on the waiting list and

they're waiting since 1995."

Now this is horrendous. Part of it is that they're restructuring, but the other part is they can't keep up. Those children are sitting in the classroom and they're causing problems within the classroom because they can't get the help outside the classroom because they are not taking patients. Why haven't we got a system in place that as soon as a child comes into a school board, or wherever, that child has got all the help it needs right there and then? It shouldn't have to run to this hospital, run to that hospital. It should all be done within one central area.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Hill. We do appreciate the time you've taken to be with us and to share the views of your organization.

Patty Ann Hill: Thanks. I hope you all read your

packets.

### STORMONT, DUNDAS AND GLENGARRY PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD

The Chair: Could I call upon the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Public School Board. Welcome.

Ms Maria Thompson: I'm Maria Thompson and this is James W. Dilamarter. Mr Dilamarter is the director of education of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Public School Board and I am the chairman of the board.

I thank you for this opportunity to appear before the standing committee on social development and to present the views not only of the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Public School Board but of its entire educational community of the counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry.

We are the first of four particular groups that are presenting today. During this afternoon, we will be followed by the Leeds-Grenville, Prescott-Russell and Lanark county boards of education, our proposed partners. Each of us represents our own community, but all of us are united in our efforts to ask you to please take another look at eastern Ontario in the name of decency, justice and equity.

Allow me to allay some of the fears of the current government and to put to rest, indeed squelch, a preconception and misconception which have been afforded primacy status within the government. I am the chairman of the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Public School Board. However, it cannot be said, should not be said and cannot be conceived that I am here to represent the interests of the trustees. I am not. Likewise, I am accompanied by my colleague James W. Dilamarter, director of education. It may not and it cannot be said that he is here to represent the interests of school board administrators. He is not.

Nor should any of you assume that we appear before you to represent in any way what might be construed as self-interest or vested interests. Simply and succinctly, I put to each one of you the fact that we are here only to represent the interests of students in Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry and, by extension, the interests of students in this province.

#### 1400

Yes, we are elected trustees and therefore represent the interests of those placed in our trust, the students. Ironic, isn't it, that where our students as a collectivity and as individuals have faith in us and trust in us to do well by them, this government, through proposed legislation such as Bill 104, has brushed aside and negated such trust?

I'm editing, so if you're following me in your papers, you'll have to jump because I don't want to sing this

I understand full well that the purpose of the standing committee on social development is to review Bill 104, the legislation which has been referred or tabled to it. I am further aware that it is your expectation that I will in my presentation address specifically various matters associated with this proposed legislation, and this I will be doing. However, I reserve the right in the second part of my presentation to go beyond the actual written legislation which you have before you and to touch upon broader and more far-reaching implications of the legisla-

tion which will come about upon its adoption by the Legislative Assembly.

First the legislation: The Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Public School Board, in consultation with its educational community, has reviewed in detail the provisions of the Fewer School Boards Act, Bill 104. Pursuant to its deliberations, the board adopted an official position which I now place before you:

"Moved by S. Airey, seconded by W. LaSalle:

"That the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Public School Board:

"(i) go on public record as not supporting the principles of school board amalgamation as espoused in Bill 104, The Fewer School Boards Act;

"(ii) indicate its strong opposition to the local proposal for amalgamation of four school boards encompassing eight counties;

"(iii) in the alternative, propose an amalgamation of Prescott-Russell with Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry;

"(iv) in light of its proposal, lend its endorsement and support to the respective positions and proposals of the Lanark County, Leeds and Grenville County and Prescott and Russell County boards of education; and

"(v) that the chairman duly communicate this board's position to all parties."

It has been pointed out to this committee on numerous occasions that the primary concern with Bill 104 lies with its outright negation of the local democratic process. The province seems intent upon eliminating local educational governments and their taxing authority and moving control of the educational system in Ontario to the province itself. We endorse very strongly the concept that our locally elected school boards in Ontario have historically worked with the governments of Ontario and have provided accountable, effective and efficient public education systems. We believe that amalgamation, within reason, can occur in this province and can benefit the educational process and can benefit our students. However, the ends do not justify the use of any means.

Simply, there are flaws in Bill 104 that must be recognized and must be corrected, after which we can proceed cooperatively with the government of this province to effect a smooth transition.

Unfortunately, Bill 104 ignores the democratic rights of all our citizens by stripping locally elected school boards of their powers and by transferring to unelected individuals who sit on the Education Improvement Commission absolute power for decision-making. One must hark back to the words that absolute power corrupts absolutely. Why should a distant commission, two and three times removed from the local scene, have the power to exercise approval and change of local budgets approved by locally elected boards?

The imprimatur of the Education Improvement Commission becomes even more draconian with the granting by Bill 104 to the commission the power to make decisions which are final and not subject to review by or appeal to any court in the land.

In speaking of unacceptable measures, I must draw your attention also to the unacceptable provision for retroactivity in this legislation. You may wish to look to

the federal government in this area. That government's well-meaning intentions to eliminate the faint hope clause in the Criminal Code were successful, but despite the looming menace of the likes of Clifford Olson could not be implemented retroactively. Simply put, any government, rightly or wrongly, may decide upon changing the rules of play, but I caution that it is hardly fair, reasonable or just to change the rules of play for matches, contests and games already played and completed.

As for the future, I remain an optimist. I am confident that this standing committee on social development will take to heart and mind the many comments being made to it and that the committee, through its commitment to do what is right and just, will bring back for the reconsideration of the Legislature a Bill 104 which is true and steadfast to the democratic principles which we espouse and live by and that the bill in its final form will not only be acceptable, but will be beneficial to all involved in the educational process.

The Ministry of Education and Training, the government of this province and the chairs already appointed of the Education Improvement Commission have provided to us a glimpse into the future of what exactly will occur with the passage of Bill 104. I would be remiss were I to ignore these omens and not speak frankly and forthrightly of the deleterious effects the proposals have for our students.

With the creation of district school boards, the government is proposing that Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry be amalgamated with the counties of Prescott and Russell, Leeds and Grenville and Lanark. This amalgamation of eight counties will produce a jurisdiction twice the size of the province of Prince Edward Island, possessing a larger population than that province and possessing to its credit three fewer school boards.

I have alluded throughout my presentation to local representation. The amalgamation of eight counties into one jurisdiction is a further negation of both the rights and expectations of our entire population. A geographical framework encompassing over 11,700 square kilometres with vastly differentiated and distributed populations cannot be seen by any reasonable person in this room as an acceptable step forward.

If we are told to make it work, then so be it. However, at what price a workable model? Let there be no mistaking the fact that this particular amalgamation will lead to the creation of a school board structure with the need for regional offices and with the need for a workforce available to work throughout an unreasonably sized jurisdiction. Where, one asks, is the cost saving? Where, one asks, is the government's commitment to local representation when it may choose, by regulation, to cap the elected officials at a maximum of eight?

Based on the current demographics, this represents one trustee responsible for a ward or jurisdiction encompassing 28,000 to 30,000 ratepayers and a minimum geographical area of over 1,300 square kilometres.

One of the proposed purposes of Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, is to introduce and to maintain equity in the delivery of educational services and programs in this province. If equity is desired, then this committee on social development, and ultimately the Education

Improvement Commission, must address first and foremost the inequities that have already been proposed. Eight counties in eastern Ontario are being amalgamated and lumped together to produce a school board with a student population of approximately 40,000 students. On the other hand, proposals for other district boards in southern Ontario provide some semblance of equity. Huron-Perth is combined to comprise 20,800 students and a territory of 5,600 square kilometres. Bruce-Grey is combined to produce 25,000 students in a territory comprising 8,500 square kilometres.

The partners to the proposed amalgamation in eastern Ontario are unanimous in their dissent and propose, with a sense of fairness, equity, and above all, natural justice, that the government not proceed as planned, that the government listen to the needs, the wants and the aspirations of its local communities and target the Prescott and Russell school board to merge with its counterpart in Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry and to further target the amalgamation of the Lanark and the Leeds and Grenville school boards. On our part, we would retain jurisdictional responsibilities for 15,000 students in a more reasonable area of 5,300 square kilometres, while the contiguous board composed of Lanark and Leeds and Grenville would have a total enrolment of 23,000 students in an area of 6,500 square kilometres.

Ultimately I must present to this committee and to all those within earshot the sincere, convincing petition of the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry public school board wherein we ask you to represent the divergent and differing needs of our communities. In the simplest terms imagine, if you will, the school boards in the eastern Ontario horseshoe complex as parent figures who speak for and on behalf of our children and who tackle day in and day out the struggles which are indigenous to our communities.

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The city of Cornwall within our jurisdiction has been described as a 19th-century town struggling to get into the 21st century. It has been since its founding a mill town: proud, unabashedly bilingual and tough. It can no longer be described as a mill town because beginning a few years ago the mills began to close. Cornwall now has a population of which 40% is on government assistance, including 19% on welfare.

With all the attendant social, economic and personal problems that this development in Cornwall's history has created, this school board and its coterminous separate board have gone beyond the relatively simple responsibility of operating schools. They have sought and received special funding from all three levels of government to provide services for children at risk. They have created programs for adults to bring Cornwall's level of education to one which will attract new businesses. They have formed a partnership with 12 other agencies to provide immediate help for children and parents through a single-point access program.

Nor is Cornwall alone in its struggles. Throughout Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry pockets of rural poverty demand that our education system look beyond the basics to offer strong multilevel support to our community. It is as if the education system we have in SD&G plays the

part of a kindly giant, an unlooked-for role but nonetheless utterly necessary, holding out a strong hand for those elements of our community to grasp while they search for a firmer hold on their future.

Prescott and Russell and Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry serve like communities and pursue in common many of the same matters. We stand united as jurisdictions which have successfully addressed the cultural needs of our communities. We have targeted, delivered and implemented programs designed to respond to the particular cultural and socioeconomic mix of our clients. We have systems and services which have bolstered programs and delivered special services as mandated by the government and as required and needed by our population.

In leaving, we need the assurance of this committee and the assurance of our government that nothing is cast in stone — not the number of school boards, not the proposed amalgamation. We need your assurance that the presentations of the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Public School Board, united unanimously with its proposed partners of Prescott, Russell, Lanark, Leeds and Grenville, will be heard loud and clear and will be treated with a sense of decency, natural justice, equity and due process.

I leave off where I began: Our children should expect no less.

The Chair: Ms Thompson, thank you very much for your presentation. I want to thank you and your colleague for being here today. You've used up all your time. Thank you for sharing your views with us.

### JOHN CRUMP

The Chair: I ask John Crump to come forward. Good afternoon, Mr Crump.

Mr John Crump: I've brought my assistants.

The Chair: Terrific. We love to see children at these hearings. Have a seat. I hope you'll introduce your copresenters. They're a wonderful addition. You have 10 minutes to make your presentation.

Mr Crump: My co-presenters are here because the act we're discussing only refers to children once. This is Rosalind, who's in senior kindergarten, and this is Sophie, who's waiting to go to junior kindergarten in the Ottawa board. My name is John Crump. I wanted to mention at the beginning that as a parent in Ottawa I do not support the position of the Ontario Parent Council, nor do many other parents I know.

If this committee is truly interested in the future of the children of this province, then it will recommend that this bill be withdrawn and replaced with legislation that is designed to reform and improve education, not destroy it in order to fund a tax cut.

I have been doing a lot of thinking recently about the kind of society that my daughters are going to live in in the year 2012. In that year, Sophie will have finished high school and she'll be looking back. I'm wondering what she'll think about the time she spent in Ontario's schools. Will the public education system have assisted us in nurturing in them a strong sense of their own selfworth and a love of learning, or will years of noisy,

rundown classrooms of 40 kids have ground down their desire to achieve academically? Will they have been warehoused in a two-tier system in which public education has devolved into the poor cousin of an élite system of private and charter schools? Will their classrooms have been places that encouraged debate and critical thinking, or will endless rote learning have taught them only how to memorize and regurgitate and prepared them only for a life of wage drudgery and consumerism? Will they have been educated as citizens or, as somebody said this morning, as "future workers for the globalized economy"?

In the short term, what assurance can the government give to the citizens of Ontario that the non-elected, appointed members of the Education Improvement Commission will know and care enough to represent the interests of local parents and taxpayers? Will the EIC respect local educational priorities and needs? Will the EIC provide an orderly transition to this new regime? Will the EIC understand the unique situation of Ottawa students and the importance of programs and services, some of which you've heard about today? These are the things that the Minister of Education has already termed to be non-classroom items.

Can the members of the EIC tell parents just what curriculum changes are planned and how those changes will benefit our children? Can the government tell us? Is Queen's Park prepared to field, respond to and resolve the concerns of thousands of parents and taxpayers across this vast province once they've removed our access to local democratic representatives in school boards?

I wanted to know what studies this government has done on the long-term effects of the changes outlined in Bill 104. I'm talking about the effects in the classroom, not on my wallet. The minister's office directed me to the bureaucracy. The officials I spoke to informed me that there are no studies. That's something I find incredible, I guess would be a word to describe it. This government is bringing in the most sweeping changes in a generation and they haven't looked at the possible effects of its decisions. Maybe they've forgotten, or maybe this is just a cash cow for the tax cut.

Bill 104 raises a number of legal questions as well, including the broad discretion and powers of delegation given to the Education Improvement Commission and the control it exercises over elected trustees. The EIC's decisions are final and cannot be appealed to a court. The EIC is retroactive. Commencing January 13, 1997, the commission gained control over school boards' actions despite the fact that the legislation is still being discussed in this room. According to one local legal analysis, "Lurking behind these concerns is the broader question of constitutionality."

These issues go to the heart of the purpose of Bill 104. Parents want answers, and this committee has a responsibility to ensure that these answers come before the legislation goes any further. But I don't have much faith that this is going to happen. As committee members know, and as parents across the province are becoming increasingly aware, this bill is not about education, it's not really about amalgamating school boards either and it's certainly not about my children. This bill is about power and money.

We have to see Bill 104 in the context of other legislation and actions of this government: municipal amalgamation, cuts to health care and hospital closings, shifting down the costs of welfare and other social services on to the property tax base, privatizing water and sewer, eliminating environmental controls in the name of efficiency, and the list goes on and on.

These are ideological choices and Bill 104 is an ideological act. Seen in this context, this bill is part of a wider anti-democratic tendency in the current government. The Minister of Education revealed much about the government's ideological position when he stated that it's important to "invent a crisis." By painting the education system as broken, bloated, inefficient, unaccountable and a failure, the government is manufacturing a crisis in order to divert further billions of dollars into its pet ideological project: the tax cut.

Seen in another context, and I find this more insidious, Bill 104 is an experiment, and the guinea pigs in this case are my children. But the participants in any experiment, whether medical, psychological or, I would argue, educational, have to consent. My children are too young to give their consent, so it's up to me, and I do not

consent to this.

If for no other reason than this, I would oppose the government's slash-and-burn approach to education because it is undemocratic, simplistic, poorly planned and uninterested in the long-term education of my children. While most parents would agree that intelligent reforms are needed in the system, they recognize that this act is neither intelligent nor interested in real reform. Therefore the government should:

(1) Withdraw Bill 104.

(2) Guarantee a stable funding base and make a commitment that the tax cut will not be funded by money that is properly directed to the educational future of children in the province.

(3) Preserve quality education.

(4) Respect the democratic process by initiating a broad non-partisan consultation process to determine the priorities of parents, teachers, students and other stakeholders.

Finally, as the Royal Commission on Learning wrote, you can't construct a school as if it were a business that manufactures widgets any more than you can manage a

school that way, and people aren't widgets.

To that I would add that my daughters aren't guinea pigs and they are not just a new generation of workers in a globalized economy. Their future is worth far more than any tax cut, and if the government doesn't realize this now and if our local Tory MPPs don't realize it, they will by the time this debate is over.

1420

To emphasize this point, I would like to table petitions that parents in Ottawa have collected. These are just a few of the petitions we've collected and we've delivered some already to our local MPPs. These petitions call on the government to properly fund public education and they call for a halt to further cuts to education to fund the tax cut.

Across this province parents are mobilizing, and you're going to hear more from them this week. These are

average citizens who have no previous experience in politics but who understand the implications of Bill 104 and other related changes being shoved at us. If this bill passes we will not go away, we will not be silenced and we will remember, come next election day, who among you supported quality education and who supported the government's attempts to take away our rights as citizens, taxpayers and parents. Thank you very much.

Interruption.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, please, there will be no outbursts in this room.

Thank you very much, Mr Crump. You've used up your 10 minutes. We thank you for coming, for bringing your children and for the petitions which I assume you will leave with the clerk.

Mr Crump: I'll give them to Mr Patten.

### CONSEIL DES ÉCOLES CATHOLIQUES DE LANGUE FRANÇAISE DE LA RÉGION D'OTTAWA-CARLETON

La Présidente: Maintenant je veux appeler le Conseil des écoles catholiques de langue française d'Ottawa-Carleton, Dominic Giroux. C'est un plaisir de vous voir der nouveau. Est-ce que vous pouvez présenter les

membres de votre groupe ?

M. Dominic Giroux: Je voudrais d'abord vous remercier d'avoir accueilli favorablement la demande de notre conseil de vous faire une présentation. Je suis accompagné de notre directeur de l'éducation et secrétaire-trésorier par intérim, M. Pierre Filiatrault, ainsi que de M<sup>me</sup> Madeleine Chevalier, vice-présidente du Regroupement des associations de parents des écoles catholiques, RAPEC, qui fera une brève intervention à la fin de ma présentation.

Le CECLF pourvoit à l'éducation de plus de 14 600 élèves francophones catholiques répartis dans 44 écoles élémentaires et secondaires desservant un territoire couvrant les 11 municipalités de la région d'Ottawa-Carleton. Nous avons vécu trois différents modèles de

gestion scolaire depuis 1988 :

Jusqu'au 31 décembre 1988, nos écoles étaient sous la juridiction des quatre conseils scolaires anglophones existants de la région d'Ottawa-Carleton, communément appelés les conseils d'origine; par la suite, le Conseil scolaire de langue française de la région d'Ottawa-Carleton, comprenant une section publique, une section catholique et un conseil plénier pour la mise en commun de certains services, a vu le jour le 1<sup>er</sup> janvier 1989, en vertu de la Loi 109; et enfin, le Conseil des écoles catholiques de langue française de la région d'Ottawa-Carleton, sous sa forme actuelle, existe depuis le 1<sup>er</sup> juillet 1994, suivant l'adoption de la Loi 143.

En 1996, notre conseil a connu la plus forte décroissance de subventions de tous les conseils de la province, soit une réduction de 7,3 %. En tant que conseil scolaire catholique et de langue française, nous sommes doublement pénalisés au niveau du financement par rapport à la moyenne provinciale. Malgré cette situation, toujours en

1996:

Nous faisions partie des 22 % des conseils scolaires de la province qui n'ont pas augmenté les taxes scolaires ;

Nous avons effectué notre dernier paiement de la dette de 8,3 \$ millions, accumulée entre 1989 et 1992 en raison du sous-financement :

Nous avons préservé le programme de la maternelle, indispensable pour contrer l'assimilation des jeunes francophones en Ontario ;

Nous avons augmenté le nombre d'enseignantes et d'enseignants en salle de classe ;

Nous avons investi des sommes additionnelles pour l'informatique dans les écoles :

Et nous avons réalisé un surplus budgétaire, destiné notamment à contrer l'effet annualisé en 1997 des réductions de subventions et qui devrait nous permettre d'investir davantage pour l'amélioration de l'enseignement et l'apprentissage des élèves.

Pour ce faire, nous avons réduit certaines dépenses administratives et de fonctionnement, notamment en transport scolaire, et nous avons repensé la prestation des services, soit par des ententes ou la sous-traitance, entre autres au niveau du développement pédagogique, des achats, de l'imprimerie, de l'entretien et de la concierge-

Suite à l'annonce du 13 janvier dernier du ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation, l'honorable John Snobelen, le CECLF avait déclaré qu'il accueillait avec satisfaction les principaux éléments de la réforme en éducation en Ontario. Pour nous, il s'agissait finalement d'une reconnaissance pleine et entière de nos droits constitutionnels en matière de gestion scolaire, qui se faisait d'ailleurs attendre depuis trop longtemps.

Nous n'avons pas changé d'opinion. Pour les membres du conseil, les élèves doivent bénéficier d'une éducation de qualité dans leur langue et leur religion. Les structures de gestion doivent en conséquence soutenir le maintien de l'intégrité linguistique et culturelle de l'école, et de façon générale, supporter la communauté franco-ontarienne de même que favoriser son épanouissement. Les parents et la communauté dans son ensemble doivent être représentés à tous les niveaux de la structure de gestion, en partant du palier local, l'école, jusqu'au niveau du palier régional, le conseil scolaire, et provincial, le ministère de l'Education et de la Formation.

Nous sommes impatients de voir comment s'articuleront les changements, et quels sont les moyens que le ministère mettra en place afin que le projet de réforme serve de catalyseur et permette à l'Ontario de se repositionner sur le plan de l'éducation, et qu'elle reprenne sa place de chef de file au Canada.

Le CECLF appuie, sans l'ombre d'un doute, la création de conseils scolaires de districts catholiques et publics de langue française, partout en province.

A compter du 1<sup>er</sup> janvier 1998, les francophones catholiques d'Ottawa-Carleton vivront un quatrième modèle de gestion scolaire en 10 ans, soit le nouveau conseil scolaire de district, dont le territoire inclura également les régions de Renfrew, Lanark, Leeds-Grenville, Frontenac, Lennox, Addington et Prince Edward-Hastings. Le nouveau conseil aura la responsabilité d'environ 16 000 élèves.

Nous aurions certainement préféré que le gouvernement suive les recommandations du rapport provisoire du Groupe d'étude sur la réduction du nombre de conseils scolaires en Ontario, présidé par John Sweeney, qui prévoyait la création de 15 conseils scolaires de langue française plutôt que 11, le maintien des deux conseils scolaires catholiques de langue française existants, celui d'Ottawa-Carleton et celui de Prescott-Russell, et la création d'un troisième conseil scolaire catholique de langue française pour le reste de la région de l'est ontarien.

Néanmoins, nous nous sommes déjà retroussé les manches et avons entamé des discussions avec nos futurs partenaires. Nous tirerons réciproquement des avantages de cette fusion. Nous travaillerons ensemble à la poursuite d'objectifs communs, et ce, pour le grand bien des jeunes et de la communauté franco-ontarienne que nous desservons.

Dans un mémoire soumis en septembre 1991 au Groupe consultatif sur la gestion de langue française, le groupe Cousineau, l'Ontario Separate School Trustees' Association écrivait :

«Le système actuel de financement de l'éducation, le système d'évaluation en particulier, est archaïque et inéquitable. L'exercice mental qu'exige l'adaptation de ce système aux impératifs de la création de conseils scolaires de langue française témoigne amplement de la nécessité d'une réforme fondamentale.

«Le CECLF se réjouit des intentions du gouvernement actuel de faire disparaître les iniquités inhérentes au financement de l'éducation. Vous trouverez en annexe de notre présentation écrite les promesses faites à notre conseil par les deux gouvernements précédents, qui n'ont pas livré la marchandise à cet égard. Le ministre a annoncé le 13 janvier qu'un nouveau modèle équitable de partage du financement sera élaboré afin que tous les élèves profitent d'une éducation de qualité où qu'ils vivent en Ontario. Ce modèle serait fondé en partie sur les commentaires reçus au document de consultation publié en septembre et intitulé Pour répondre aux besoins des élèves. Le nouveau modèle de financement permettrait d'assumer les coûts de l'éducation des élèves, et notamment ceux qui se trouvent dans des circonstances narticulières.

«Or, notre conseil a endossé à la fois les éléments identifiés comme les problèmes actuels ainsi que les principes inhérents au financement de l'éducation en Ontario, tel qu'énoncés dans ce document du ministère. Dans cette optique, nous sommes convaincus que, nonobstant le modèle de financement sur lequel la province arrêtera son choix, l'équité inhérente à la prestation de l'éducation ne se réalisera qu'au sein d'un système d'éducation qui prévoira un accès équitable aux ressources, basé sur le nombre d'élèves, et ajusté pour les circonstances particulières des différentes communautés.»

Dans notre réponse au document de consultation du ministère, nous avons identifié les circonstances particulières en quatre catégories générales :

D'abord et de loin la plus importante, l'éducation en langue française ;

La faible concentration d'effectifs ;

La concentration de néo-Canadiens ; et Les besoins en matière d'enfance en difficulté.

Il nous apparaît essentiel de rappeler au gouvernement que les francophones de l'Ontario doivent bénéficier d'un financement équivalent à la majorité anglophone, et dans des circonstances particulières, ce financement pourra et devra même être supérieur à celui accordé à la majorité anglophone.

Dans la même veine, les Franco-Ontariennes et les Franco-Ontariens ont un droit qui leur est reconnu par les tribunaux pour ce qui touche à un financement dit de rattrapage, afin de remédier à l'érosion progressive de la

minorité francophone.

Les conseillères et conseillers scolaires du CECLF qui ont siégé de 1991 à 1994 à la section catholique du Conseil scolaire de langue française de la région d'Ottawa-Carleton, ont vécu la mise en tutelle de la section publique, et par défaut du conseil plénier. Certains droits de gestion des francophones catholiques étaient alors soumis au bon vouloir d'un superviseur nommé par la Commission des affaires municipales, CAMO, et ce en raison notamment d'une mauvaise gestion qui n'était pourtant pas la leur. Vous comprendrez alors que ces conseillères et conseillers scolaires expriment un sentiment de déjà vu, face à la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation.

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La composition de la commission préoccupe également mes collègues. Le CECLF recommande au ministre d'assurer une représentation francophone, afin de reconnaître la participation de la communauté franco-ontarienne à l'essor de l'Ontario, et par ce fait, de lier étroitement les francophones dans leur prise en charge de l'éducation. La fusion des quatre conseils scolaires, 59 sections et huit comités consultatifs de langue française, en 11 conseils scolaires de districts francophones, représente un défi de taille. Le projet de loi 104 évoque déjà ce besoin de représentation francophone pour les comités locaux d'amélioration de l'éducation ; il suffirait donc de l'ajouter au niveau de la commission en tant que tel.

Nous souhaitons que la commission soit mise en place dans les meilleurs délais, et ce afin qu'elle puisse émettre des directives claires qui élimineraient les obstacles aux investissements ou aux créations de postes dans des domaines pédagogiques, et ce pour les conseils scolaires comme le CECLF, qui ont atteint l'équilibre budgétaire sans augmenter les taxes scolaires, et ce malgré un sous-financement. À titre d'exemple, notre conseil a identifié des besoins pressants visant la création de postes d'informaticiennes et d'informaticiens en salle de classe afin de mieux supporter le personnel enseignant. Cette décision tarde à être mise en oeuvre car elle doit faire l'objet d'une approbation de la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation.

En conclusion, notre conseil est favorable à plusieurs éléments contenus dans la présente réforme mise de l'avant par le gouvernement ; elle vise l'atteinte d'objectifs communs, soit l'excellence, l'équité et la rentabilité.

L'obtention de la gestion scolaire par et pour les francophones constitue un gain historique. Afin que cette gestion soit réussie, nous encourageons le ministre à concrétiser ses intentions de doter l'Ontario d'un modèle de financement de l'éducation qui sera équitable et adéquat. À cette fin, l'éducation en langue française constitue une «circonstance particulière» des plus importantes.

Le gouvernement indique que les changements s'effectueront dans le respect des droits constitutionnels, ainsi que dans la tradition qui confère au palier local un contrôle et un pouvoir décisionnel en matière d'éducation. Il peut en ce sens être assuré de notre coopération. Une entrée en fonction imminente de la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation devrait toutefois faciliter les choses.

L'absence de certains éléments de la mise en oeuvre nous amènera cependant à demeurer vigilants au cours de cette importante période de transition. C'est une responsa-

bilité qui nous incombe.

Je vous remercie de votre attention, et si vous permet-

tez, je vais passer la parole à Mme Chevalier.

M<sup>me</sup> Madeleine Chevalier: Je suis ici à titre de représentante du regroupement des associations de parents des écoles catholiques, RAPEC, du Conseil des écoles catholiques de langue française d'Ottawa-Carleton. Je suis mère de trois enfants, dont deux à l'élémentaire et une à l'intermédiaire. Je suis vice-présidente du RAPEC.

Le RAPEC regroupe les représentants de parents des écoles élémentaires et secondaires de notre conseil. Je suis ici aujourd'hui pour vous faire part de notre appui à

la restructuration en éducation.

Les parents du RAPEC appuient la création des conseils scolaires francophones catholiques et publics à travers la province. Nous sommes heureux de constater que le gouvernement reconnaisse finalement le droit de gestion scolaire aux francophones. Par contre, un financement équitable et adéquat est une condition essentielle à la qualité d'éducation pour tous les élèves de la province.

Avec la grandeur des territoires des nouveaux conseils scolaires de district, les conseils d'école devront nécessairement assumer un rôle élargi. Nous sommes heureux de constater que dans le projet de loi, le mandat de la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation inclue l'étude du rôle éventuel des conseils d'école et de la participation accrue des parents dans l'éducation de leurs enfants.

Malgré le potentiel d'une certaine décentralisation que nous souhaitons comme parents, le gouvernement doit toutefois assurer l'intégrité du système d'éducation provincial tout en visant une équité entre les écoles d'un

même conseil.

En terminant, tel que recommandé dans le rapport Sweeney, il est impératif que les négociations des nouvelles conventions collectives, suite aux fusions des conseils scolaires, n'aient pas pour effet d'augmenter la masse salariale totale de ces conseils. Le gouvernement devra assurer que les économies réalisées par cette restructuration seront bel et bien réinvesties intégralement en salle de classe afin que tous les enfants de l'Ontario puissent bénéficier d'une haute qualité d'éducation. Merci.

La Présidente : Malheureusement il n'y a pas de temps de poser des questions, mais je veux de la part du comité vous remercier d'être venus cet après-midi.

OTTAWA ROMAN CATHOLIC SEPARATE SCHOOL BOARD CARLETON ROMAN CATHOLIC SEPARATE SCHOOL BOARD

The Chair: The Ottawa Roman Catholic board of education and the Carleton Roman Catholic board of

education, Jim Kennelly and June Flynn-Turner. Good afternoon. Thank you very much for being here. You have 15 minutes to make your presentation jointly. We appreciate that you've come together to make this presentation.

Mr Jim Kennelly: Thank you, Madam Chair. You'll also be getting two briefs from us today, one from each board. You can have that for your airplane or airport reading.

It's certainly our pleasure to be here today. We're here representing 170,000-plus ratepayers between the Carleton Roman Catholic Separate School Board and the Ottawa Roman Catholic Separate School Board. Even with this representation, we had some difficulty securing a spot today, but it is certainly our pleasure to be here and be able to present to you.

Mrs June Flynn-Turner: There are over two million children in this province; over 600,000 of them are Catholics. There have only been 10 days of hearings scheduled. Here in Ottawa-Carleton, there are 36,000 Catholic students. We're very disappointed that not one single Catholic parent group has been given the opportunity to speak here today. They are concerned about the education of their children as well.

Mr Kennelly: As you know, this city is very familiar with the topic of amalgamation when it comes to school boards. In reading the drafting of Bill 104, I believe there are four assumptions that the government has focused on, whether it really meant to or not: the obvious, that there should be fewer school boards; that there should be changes in governance and financing and that amalgamation is required to make those changes; school boards should focus on amalgamation, not reforms, is what we read in this legislation; and we read that bigger is better.

In recent years, we've had the benefit of an independent report from Mr Brian Bourns, and you're going to hear from him this afternoon, so I'll allow him to make those comments, because I'm sure he's heard us support nis comments many times. It said that amalgamation will not save money in Ottawa-Carleton but it will cost more in taxes. Although Ottawa has had a few more years to talk about amalgamation, in the reading of Bill 104 we're surprised that the government has not provided us with a plan to implement Bill 104; it has simply been where we want to go but no plan to get there. That is why we support what others have told you today. We believe there needs to be a year's delay in the implementation in order to implement Bill 104.

Mrs Flynn-Turner: For the sake of our students, both our boards are committed, in whatever time we have available to do it, to putting into place the best system in Ottawa-Carleton for our students. However, without answers to a lot of the questions, the task is almost impossible. What will the funding formula be? Will it be equitable? Will it be adequate for the needs of all of the students in this province, from the neediest student to the most gifted? When will we be given the new curriculum? Will there be adequate resources to implement it? Will there be adequate time lines to implement it? How can we harmonize programs if we don't even know what programs are going to be required? What are the rules going to be that govern collective bargaining? How can we

harmonize contracts if we don't even know if we're going to be responsible for doing that or if it's going to be done regionally or provincially? As a Catholic school system, we're very concerned that our employees be treated with justice.

Mr Kennelly: In that this legislation was taking education off the property tax and moving education to income tax, we believe that Toronto will be controlling the schools and will be controlling the decision on education. In fact, we believe that the local members of Parliament will now become the school board trustees, and the government is really fooling the public to call school board representatives "trustees." You are giving the impression that trustees will be the decision-makers. Trustees may be the lobbyists, but they will certainly not be the decision-makers, at least locally.

Contrary to what you might expect, trustees agree that there need to be fewer trustees. We have said that in Ottawa-Carleton for quite some time. We do point out, though, that there is a perceptual reduction in administrative costs by getting rid of a large number of trustees. In the Ottawa Catholic board, the percentage cost of trustees is 0.33 of 1% of an \$80-million budget. Those are hardly the administrative costs that you want to save.

For 140 years, there has been local representation and partnership in education here in this city. When it comes to Catholic education, there has been a partnership with the church, with the family, with the school board and the school board trustees. That's the threat that is our biggest concern.

We believe there needs to be someone to ensure equity in local education, because in the city core — and I am only speaking for the city core at this point — we have 60% of the Ottawa-Carleton poor; we have parents who do not speak English; we have parents who are not able to set up school councils and have financially stable school councils like some, say, perhaps in a professional, two-income family that lives in the suburbs.

We would assume that a new board will make the best decisions for all. But in your legislation and what we have heard from the ministry, we need you to focus on the term "density," speaking as a city board. We believe there needs to be someone who is looking out for the inner-city poor, to make sure there is fairness across the system.

### 1440

When we look at the legislation, we see the possibility of three trustees out of nine being from the city core, although the city core is the board that is taking the tax assessment to the new board. We believe there needs to be some local ability to tax, perhaps within the business tax. Up until now there has been a percentage of the local tax on capital expected from the local community. Maybe that is where the local community needs the ability to tax, and that is through the business tax. When you look at capital in particular, you need to look for growth in the suburbs and be able to build but you need to take care of old buildings in the centre core. Your local community needs some kind of ability to tax to do that.

Mrs Flynn-Turner: One of our concerns with representation is that we represent three municipalities and five rural townships. Four of those rural townships currently

have two trustees on our board. That represents 13% of the board. Will there be any rural representation on this new board that's going to have maybe eight trustees representing all of Ottawa-Carleton? We would like to know why these questions aren't answered as part of this legislation. It's very difficult to comment on the legislation when we don't even know what the representation is going to be.

Mr Kennelly: We want you to focus in on startup costs, and you can ask Mr Bourns those questions. The startup costs for the Ottawa-Carleton police force were \$23 million. We ask you to look at Dartmouth and Halifax. It was predicted to be \$10 million and has gone to \$25 million. We are now hearing from municipalities that they are going to charge school boards to run municipal elections for the school boards. Who is going to pick up that kind of cost? Is it the local school board or is it the income tax legislation?

Mrs Flynn-Turner: As the legislation currently stands, the Education Improvement Commission is above the law. Will they have the ability to usurp the constitutional rights of Catholics to govern their own system? Will there be an appeal process to protect the interests of Catholic students?

Mr Kennelly: On the constitutional issue, we believe that if you control the money, in most cases you control the decisions. If our worst fears come to be reality in this funding formula and the decision-making is all in Toronto and Catholics are not governing Catholic schools, I assure you that the Ottawa Catholic school board and the Carleton Catholic school board and many others will work with our partners, like the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and many others, to challenge on constitutional grounds the ability of the government to do that. You know the constitutional legislation that says that Catholics must be able to manage and govern Catholic schools.

The funding formula is key to finding out if the government really wants to respect denominational rights, but of course we haven't seen that funding formula yet. That will be the big decision for us.

Mrs Flynn-Turner: The Royal Commission on Learning, which had all-party support, gave us a blueprint to begin building a better education system for all of the children in this province. We have grave concerns that Bill 104 will not make education better, just different, and that our children will be the losers. A whole generation of children is at risk here. We ask you to please make their needs your first priority.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We have about a minute per caucus.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much and thank you for combining your presentations, although I know it's little enough time to be able to express the concerns you have.

I wanted to ask you about the role of school trustees, as you see it, under the scenario of the new amalgamated boards, with less access, less representation of individual communities, as you have suggested. We've been told by the ministry people that they are going to look at a low-density factor for representation, which might address the rural question but doesn't address the high-density issue

which you've raised. But the larger question is, if I can put it to you, how do you see the role of trustees? You've begun to touch on that. Does it lead ultimately to the ineffectiveness of school boards, both because of lack of access and lack of funding control?

Mr Kennelly: From a city point of view, the articulate can usually speak up for themselves. In the inner core, we have quite a bit of difficulty getting parents involved in parent councils and such because we'll have school communities not very far from here that may have representation from 19 different language or cultural groups in one school of 300 students. That makes it very difficult for the local inner-city type of schools to have representation. Our parents have always said they want local people whom they can contact to present their concerns.

Mr Wildman: Thank you very much for your presentation. My question is related to, if I could paraphrase your view towards the end of your presentation, "He who pays the piper calls the tune." Would it have been more appropriate to have the funding formula presented to the public for consultation prior to the restructuring legislation? Second, how do you respond to the view that has been expressed by Patrick Daly that Catholic boards are holding in abeyance their right to tax and the constitutional issue and they'll wait to see?

Mrs Flynn-Turner: Obviously for us the funding formula is going to be the important thing. I don't know that it should have come out before, but it certainly all should have come together. All of this legislation should have come out as a package so that we had an opportunity to study the whole thing, not just one piece. This piece will be passed as legislation, and it will be more difficult for us if we don't like the funding formula that comes out. What Mr Daly has been saying is that the Catholic school system will give the government the benefit of the doubt at this point and we will wait and see. But if the funding formula removes our rights to govern our own school system, then we will not accept that. We won't sell our soul.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Mr Kennelly, for coming to the presentation this afternoon and for a very balanced report. I just wanted to understand — looking at appendix A in both boards' reports — with your coterminous board, who spends most in the English panel per student, the public or the separate system, and is there a difference in outcome?

Mr Kennelly: Is that rhetorical?

Mr O'Toole: No. I'm trying to figure it out here.

**Mr Kennelly:** The public system in Ottawa spends more.

**Mr O'Toole:** The second part to that is, in your view, does the French section in those same areas spend more or less per student?

Mr Kennelly: To be honest with you, I'm not as familiar with what the French board would spend.

Mr O'Toole: Do you think we should be testing the students in Ontario as they are, starting today?

Mr Kennelly: I have no difficulty with the testing. I'm a little concerned at the cost that's going into all this testing. I would rather see the curriculum for a year tested rather than having someone prepped for 10 days

and then Purolate people in and the government pay for supply teachers and the government provide teachers with lunch while they're being trained to do the testing. I think there is a much cheaper way to do the testing, but I am very much in favour of the testing.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Kennelly and Mrs Flynn-Turner, for being here and for giving us the

views of your organizations.

### LEEDS AND GRENVILLE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: I call upon the Leeds and Grenville County Board of Education, Mrs Joan Hodge. Welcome. As you settle, I'll ask you to introduce your co-presenters and remind you that you have 15 minutes to make your presentation. If time permits, we'll ask you some questions.

Mrs Joan Hodge: I am the chair of the Leeds and Grenville County Board of Education. I'd like to introduce you to our director, David Reid, and Joe McKeown, our coordinator of legal services and negotiations. Thank you for allowing us to present our views on behalf of the Leeds and Grenville County Board of Education and our

submission regarding Bill 104.

"It (Bill 104) is the first part of our legislative strategy to implement major changes to the education system in Ontario." With this statement, included in correspondence to the education community on January 24, 1997, the Honourable John Snobelen embarked on his government's campaign to overhaul the governance of public elementary and secondary education in the province of Ontario.

A strategy is commonly defined as a long-term plan or policy. No one in this board argues with the legitimate interest of our provincial government in developing strategies in any area of its jurisdiction, including public education. However, it is vital, in our view, that the long-term plan and all strategies being pursued in its furtherance be made known simultaneously so that thoughtful and temperate examination and assessment might be encouraged.

Since we have neither insight nor vision into the overall plan, we are left with the necessity of addressing each component of the grand design as it presents itself. We are uncomfortable with this approach but none the less hopeful that our observations will go some way in influencing and determining what everyone says they want: an improved education for every student in this grand province consistent with his or her needs and abilities. In attaining that lofty goal, does Bill 104 assist?

1450

Before embarking on an examination of the substance of the act and its foreseeable consequences in its present form, it will be useful to declare our biases. We do not wish you to record that we—trustees, administrators, teachers, custodians, secretaries, psychologists, psychometrists, social workers, teacher assistants—are anything other than a special interest group. Our special interests are our students, our children, our grandchildren. To the extent that Bill 104 promotes and advances their interests, so will it ours.

As a matter of record, we feel obliged to dissociate ourselves, our predecessors in office and our staff from

certain misstatements included in the minister's speech introducing Bill 104. While no doubt some of us are interested in golf, we have no interest in a golf course. Relief from Ontario winter is not part of our trusteeship. Water does not fall artificially from or in any of our facilities. Our five-figure honorarium is interrupted by a decimal point.

Our presentation with respect to the substance of Bill 104 will address a number of concerns which we have separated into the following topics: democratic process and responsible government; representational rights and the role of trustees; programs and students; funding and taxation; physical geography; legislative agenda; transi-

tional issues.

Democratic process and responsible government: We have had the benefit of reviewing the submissions to this committee advanced on behalf of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association. We adopt their comments and recommendations as our own. There are additional concerns not specifically addressed in that submission which we believe ought to be brought to your attention.

Lord Durham is generally credited with the introduction of responsible government into the territory which we now call Ontario. The hallmark of responsible government is not government by plurality nor even majority as recorded at a specific point of temporal reference, such as election day; rather it is, or has been, a delicate balancing of the interests of diverse constituents in the pursuit of the common good. In Durham's day and the more than 150 years since, the cornerstone of political building has been local government. It is truly the only form of government to which the term "grass roots" can be properly applied. Bill 104 will divert and dilute both responsibility and accountability for decision-making based on needs that only the local community is equipped and motivated to understand.

Each step to centralization of the governance of education is a lessening of the influence of those most closely connected to the welfare and wellbeing of the student. There is absolutely no empirical evidence that the bigger-is-better philosophy in terms of units of governance of education is valid.

Representational rights and the role of trustees: Perhaps the most offensive aspects of Bill 104 are those which, while expanding the territorial jurisdiction of the new district school boards, reduce the representation of local electors to participate fully in the policy directions of the

new entity.

As the current minister recently noted, confirming what everyone else has known for more than 150 years, a significant role of a trustee is guardianship of the education of elementary and secondary-school-age children. It is worthy of emphasis that in developing the institutional process through which educational governance was to be provided, the representatives of the people were identified as trustees, as distinct from politicians. The distinction is not insignificant. The concept of trusteeship as it relates to education expressly recognizes the special relationship between the holders of the trust and its object: the educational wellbeing of our children during the term of their legal minority. The concept imposes a responsibility and an accountability unlike in kind or importance to

those commonly associated with politicians. Decisions respecting better roads or improved sewer capacity are not matters of trust.

Bill 104, in our submission, will significantly erode the principles of trusteeship. It will lead to the politicization of education as a public service. It will restrict access not only in terms of the number of trustees but also in the characteristics of those who seek trusteeship. Personal financial ability, job commitments and family obligations will impede many dedicated, hardworking and interested incumbents and prospective candidates from now seeking the office. The prospect of political party affiliation and the potential use of trusteeship as a political career stepping stone is both foreseeable and disheartening under the regime envisioned by Bill 104.

Programs and students: Apart from the Orwellian designation of the Education Improvement Commission as the body to be established to oversee and direct the transition from the current governance model to the proposed district board system, the absence of anything in the proposed act having anything to do with education or its improvement is remarkable. It is not a stretch in our view to observe that the fragmentation and isolation inherent in the expanded jurisdiction dictated by the district board system will sound the death knell to local program initiatives. The singleminded pursuit of a dubious accounting objective will never be mistaken for educational improvement.

The virtual elimination of junior kindergarten, the gutting of adult education programs and the attempted fast-tracking of secondary school reform are all present indicators of the government's view of what constitutes a quality education in Ontario. The prospect of a provincially created and centrally funded resource allocation model and the lingering threat of a future reduction in support to public education in the order of an additional \$1 billion provide no comfort that student needs will be served either as well or at all. Bill 104 will of course significantly reduce one thing: effective resistance by a fully informed local public to an agenda directed to satisfy Bay Street rather than Main Street.

Funding and taxation: While it may be politically astute to separate governance from funding, as Bill 104 would do, it is ultimately a dishonest exercise to undertake. It is worthwhile and instructive to note that the companion piece to the minister's speaking notes on the introduction of Bill 104 was not a political treatise on the merits of locally elected trusteeship as a form of democratic government. It was, rather, a hastily commissioned analysis of financial data provided by the ministry, restricted by its definition and designed solely to discredit trusteeship generally and its fiscal responsibility in particular. Even so, Ernst and Young, the authors of the document, were quick to disclaim, perhaps blushingly, its validity in the following terms: "We did not verify the accuracy or completeness of the data and render no opinion on it."

Nevertheless, Ernst and Young conclude that there are few factors which can predict different spending patterns among boards, that any new funding model should be reflective of a better understanding by the ministry of the variants at play and that best practices by expenditure

category should be identified and promoted. It notes, as well, that boards which have more financial resources spend more per pupil than boards which have fewer financial resources. The mind boggles at the depth of these critical insights.

Were it indeed the intent of the minister to determine best practices, exemplify fiscal efficiency, encourage accountability to parents, students and taxpayers, while maintaining an excellent and still-improving system of public education, he could most certainly have done so. A careful and thoughtful analysis of what is happening in fact in boards such as Leeds and Grenville and several of its counterparts across the province would surely have been more effective in achieving these purposes.

It may be, as has been suggested, that the reliance on residential property taxation as one of the primary mechanisms for funding public education is either outdated or inherently inappropriate. The one thing that it has unquestionably achieved is an intense local interest in how and to what purposes locally collected revenues have been applied in the education of our children. It has compelled a diverse range of locally elected representatives to critically examine what the community wants, what the students need, what compromises have to be made and to what end available resources will be allocated.

How can anyone believe or conceive that a local influence will survive in a district school board setting which by design expands the local community to a regional base; diminishes representation and, by extension, accountability to the local community; eliminates all fiscal responsibility for educational decision-making affecting our children; and concentrates all power and authority in a provincial bureaucracy?

Pardon us for concluding that Bill 104 is not about governance; it's not about equity; it's not about economies of scale; it's not about education; and it's not about improvement.

What is it about? It's about scapegoating trusteeship. It's about eliminating measured criticism of government initiatives. It's about diverting responsibility of this government and its predecessors from their obscene reductions in financial support to students in this province. It is, at the end of the day, an excuse to camouflage the withdrawal of another \$1 billion from the educational resources available to the benefit of the children of this province.

Physical geography: Today's quiz, boys and girls, concerns geography and arithmetic. What is twice as large as Prince Edward Island, has 200,000 more residents, has 15,000 more students and has three fewer school boards? The answer: The proposed Lanark, Leeds-Grenville, Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry, Prescott-Russell district school board.

Attached to our submission is a copy of correspondence directed to the minister from the Lanark County Board of Education. We add our endorsement to the concerns and recommendations noted in that letter.

In our view, bigger is not better, it is simply bigger. We believe, perhaps smugly, that boards of our approximate size in terms of enrolment are the most efficient. All of the statistical information which has been used by the

ministry in justifying its direction will support this observation. Amalgamation as an end in itself is totally meaningless.

Legislative agenda and transitional issues: As we indicated in our opening caution, responding intelligently on Bill 104 as a distinct piece of legislation without knowledge of the balance of the legislative agenda for public education is a risky endeavour. It would be some comfort to believe that a fully integrated package exists and that the sum of all the parts will equal its whole. We are sceptical that this will be the outcome. We were once promised a toolkit to assist us in grappling with the expenditure reductions in education. That turned out to be a fool's kit. The same minister is still in place.

Within the body of Bill 104 is the creation of the socalled Education Improvement Commission, an appointed bureaucracy with supra-parliamentary powers and authorities. When it is fully legally constituted and empowered to act, it will be in effect the Ministry of Education. No force, whether of reason or otherwise, will be permitted to stand in its way. It will be, in terms of school boards, its very own government for the next four years. Is there no one on this committee, and particularly from the government side, who finds this prospect scary?

Did anyone in this province vote this disturbing power and authority without responsibility to David Cooke or

Ann Vanstone or whoever else might be willing to be coopted? Is the Legislature of this province so bereft of commitment to principle that it is prepared to substitute political anointment for local democracy?

What is the budget established for this additional, unnecessary and intrusive bureaucracy? What else is on the horizon? How will Bill 104 interact with other legislative changes which must surely be coming, Bill 100, the Labour Relations Act, pay equity, general legislative grants? What are the transitional costs, and where will the funds come from? What is the impact in human terms on employee morale, job security, training and development, dislocation and unemployment?

If there is a whole picture, present it for public viewing. If it is still a work in progress, delay any further action on Bill 104 until full and meaningful public input has been provided. You owe that consideration not to us but to those we proudly represent.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs Hodge. I regret you've gone beyond the allotted time. Your presentation was most interesting, and I allowed you to carry on. Thank you and Mr Reid and Mr McKeown for being here this afternoon.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are recessed until 3:30. The committee recessed from 1505 to 1532.

Report continues in volume B.







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# Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

# Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36e législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Monday 17 March 1997

Standing committee on social development

Fewer School Boards Act. 1997

### Journal des débats (Hansard)

Lundi 17 mars 1997

Comité permanent des affaires sociales

Loi de 1997 réduisant le nombre de conseils scolaires



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### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Monday 17 March 1997

### ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

### COMITÉ PERMANENT DES AFFAIRES SOCIALES

Lundi 17 mars 1997

Report continued from volume A. 1532

## FEWER SCHOOL BOARDS ACT, 1997 LOI DE 1997 RÉDUISANT LE NOMBRE DE CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Continuing consideration of Bill 104, An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system, providing for certain matters related to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 104, Loi visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte, l'efficacité et la qualité du système scolaire ontarien en permettant la réduction du nombre des conseils scolaires, en créant la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation, chargée d'encadrer la transition vers le nouveau système, en prévoyant certaines questions liées aux élections de 1997 et en apportant d'autres améliorations à la Loi sur l'éducation et à la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.

### WALTER ROBINSON

The Chair: I'll ask Mr Walter Robinson to come forward. Thank you very much, Mr Robinson, for being with us this afternoon.

Mr Walter Robinson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak before the committee this afternoon. My name is Walter Robinson. I'm a past president of the Ottawa-Carleton Junior Board of Trade here in the region, representing over 150 members and associates. My involvement in education stems back to 1993 when we authored a report on school board reorganization in Ottawa-Carleton, as well as being a candidate in the 1991 and 1994 municipal elections. I may add that I was an unsuccessful candidate, and given the changes we're undergoing in our education system today, I think that's not a bad thing.

My present position is as manager of business development for a large international company which specializes in alternative service delivery to government and other organizations.

I'm here to applaud the general intent and thrust of Bill 104, known as the Fewer School Boards Act, or as some people have referred to it, the fewer school board act. I'd like to applaud the government's initiatives in terms of the conflict-of-interest provisions it has put into the bill in terms of teachers and spouses of people

employed in the educational system holding trustee positions in contiguous or the same boards.

As well, I'd like to applaud the move towards sitebased management through greater parent councils. I think they're very important in that parents have a great role to play in the administration of our local schools and school boards.

I'd also like to offer just a few concerns. First, on the cap on trustees' salaries at \$5,000, I know full well the effort that many trustees put into sitting in school board discussions, and I see Mrs McLeod there and others who have served as school board trustees in the past. The \$5,000 honorarium is very much a pittance for the effort and time and hours that all trustees put in, regardless of their political persuasion or the views they bring to the table. I think they all share a passion for public education. I'd ask you to look at that provision and see if there's a more equitable figure that could be given for the new defined role of school board trustee that you're looking to put forward.

As well, I would question the legislation requiring school councils. I have no problems with school councils, but if you're going to legislate something, legislation requires enforcement. How do you enforce a school council? In the Ottawa-Carleton region here where I ran in the downtown core, there are some schools with great new Canadian communities or parents who send their disabled children to these schools, and getting back into the core for parent council meetings is sometimes a challenge or they're not culturally predisposed to having a say in school board management and they defer to authority. I'd question how you're going to legislate school councils. If you can't have a school parent council, what are the penalties for that?

Finally, I could see the bill going further in the form of pooling. There's a big argument against pooling the commercial-industrial assessment around the province in terms of Toronto's commercial-industrial assessment coming to Ottawa to fund schooling or the Ottawa-Carleton commercial-industrial assessment going to fund schooling in another part of the province. To me, education is a public good. It is like health care. If I'm a business owner, I don't really mind whether my taxes go here to support education locally or go to support education in Sudbury. All students should have access to that education. I think it's the same principle as health care: Where you pay your dollars doesn't matter; it's for use by the general public.

Those, in a nutshell, are my comments on Bill 104. I'd

entertain any questions you may have.

Mr Pettit: Thank you, Mr Robinson, for your presentation. You've indicated some of the things you like

about Bill 104, but maybe you could tell us what, if anything, you see is wrong with the system as is?

Mr Robinson: In terms of the general educational system, one place where the government could move in concert with school boards is in the concept of land banking. Your government's and the Liberal position papers were on moving away from land banking for school boards. The minister has outlined his wish to have a great deal of information technology infrastructure in the schools, and disposing of a lot of the surplus real estate assets that some of your urban boards have which are in very little- growth positions would go a long way to funding some of those infrastructure costs for education to make our students more technologically literate. That's one area.

Mr Pettit: Anything else?

Mr Robinson: Just a greater move to site-based management in the school system, especially if you've taken property taxes off the local tax bill and put it into

general income levies in that sense.

We have to question the role of the school board trustee. The school board trustee was there to fight for local tax interests: the 30% of the people who have kids in the system and the 70% who pay rates who do not have children in the system. They were there to fight for all those interests. When you've taken that off the local tax bill, you have to redefine the role of the school board trustee, which I think you're doing in the legislation, or you've made a commitment to do.

Mr Pettit: I think you make a good point on the legislation of school councils, as to how you enforce that. That is probably something we will have to look at. It's been my experience at a lot of parent council meetings that I've attended — in fact, most were by acclamation on the parents' councils, and second, there weren't a lot of other parents there besides the actual council. I think you raise a good point as to how you force a school council upon a school if there's no parental interest.

Mr Robinson: Legislation without enforcement just keeps a bureaucrat in a position; it doesn't serve a public

purpose.

Mr Patten: Mr Robinson, good to see you. I appreciate your comments. I know you have sensitivity towards some of the trustees. I would be interested in your comments related to the role of the so-called Education Improvement Commission that will essentially render the trustees somewhat impotent throughout this amalgamation period — this commission will be in place until the year 2000; that's still another three or three and a half years or whatever — and whether you feel that model, which essentially does not honour democratic local participation, is a good thing.

Mr Robinson: I can't call you Mr Patten. I have to call you Richard; you're my MPP. In a sense, I don't think they're going to render the trustees impotent; I think they're going to redefine the role of the trustees. Remember, the democratic role, Richard, for the trustees is that they were there to represent a local taxation interest first and foremost. That taxation interest has been put on the provincial income tax, if you care to say so, so people will be calling you now in terms of where those dollars are going, or any other members around the table.

Where the Education Improvement Commission can look to redefine the role of the trustees would be in Bette Stephenson's green paper, I believe in 1979, called the Role of the School Board Trustee —

Mr Patten: I'm too young for that.

Mr Robinson: So am I. Mrs McLeod: I'm not.

Mr Robinson: That was basically tabled and I think there's still a lot of good information in there which could help redefine the role of the trustees, who still have roles to play.

Mr Patten: There still will be a business tax related to education so the trustees would still have some role related to that, while it's not the individual property

taxpayer any more.

Mr Robinson: They're still paying, in this region, about 51% of the freight for local taxation, especially here in the downtown core. Where you're here now pays about 70% of the education bill in this region, so the downtown trustees, if they have a more proportionate role to play, is definitely in representing those business interests. But as I indicated before, I am personally not against — education is a public good to be accessed by all citizens of the province.

Mr Grandmaître: I want to go back to land banking. That's very interesting. What are your thoughts on

development charges?

Mr Robinson: Development charges in general — I know we're kind of jumping out of the realm of the legislation we're supposed to be discussing — are a prepaid property tax to fund development in outlying cores. As you know, they are a very contentious issue in this region. I have no thoughts on them, and I don't think they're relevant to what we're discussing.

Mr Grandmaître: The government at the present time will prohibit school boards from charging lot levies. Do you have any thoughts on this? Do you think school boards should continue to have development charges?

Mr Robinson: I have no thoughts. I haven't given

enough thought to the issue.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Robinson. We appreciate your coming here and giving us your views.

### **BRIAN BOURNS**

The Chair: Will Mr Brian Bourns please come forward? Welcome to the committee.

Mr Brian Bourns: Thank you very much. I am here more than anything because I was appointed by Mr Cooke in 1993 to have a look at the school board structure in Ottawa-Carleton specifically and look at a couple of things, whether there should be any amalgamations or changes in the structure and, in the alternative, whether there might be closer cooperation between school boards to reduce costs and get some of the savings that were hoped for through amalgamations.

The findings I had, remembering this was now four years ago — first of all, dealing with the French board, the French board in Ottawa-Carleton had a peculiar structure in that there was an attempt to create one board out of a combined Catholic and public sector program.

We had Catholic and public sectors, much as you have French-language sections in some of the existing boards, each of which was supposed to respond to a plenary or an overview council that provided some joint services to the two boards.

The findings I had at the time were that there was no way to effectively give the plenary the authority to carry on its activities without infringing upon the constitutional autonomy of the two groups it was serving. Since the two groups couldn't agree on what they wanted out of the plenary, the result was in essence that rather than saving duplication, we had triplication, with the two panels setting up their own structures to duplicate what was in the plenary group. I recommended to, and the government did eventually abolish, the plenary and established the two school boards which vou're now contemplating expanding the geography of as separate entities. I believe that has worked well in the sense that it has eliminated the friction and even allowed for more cooperation which can happen on a voluntary basis than was happening on a forced basis.

In looking at the English boards, I found at the time that there was some potential to save money by amalgamating the two public boards and the two Catholic boards. The savings I forecast strictly from amalgamation were about \$5.3 million for the public boards and \$1.8 million for the Catholic boards, not huge numbers in the context of roughly a \$1-billion budget for education in Ottawa-Carleton, but certainly some numbers.

I also found there were additional potential savings of about \$15.4 million for the public boards and \$1.5 million for the Catholic boards if they not only amalgamated, but changed the way they did business and adopted best practices in a number of areas that we specifically reviewed.

Put those together and you've got a somewhat more substantial number in terms of savings that might be achieved by carrying out an amalgamation. It's probably important to realize, though, that those numbers may have decreased in the meantime, as the amount of superfluous or duplicative administration at each of the boards has decreased as their spending levels have gone down in the last three or four years.

Other issues came up in my study of amalgamation that I thought were important and warranted consideration. There are radically different levels of service between the boards that would be amalgamated. In the most extreme example we had, on the public board side, if your child was having some difficulty reading they would get an appointment with a specialist within two weeks and if they were found to need some remedial help they'd get it within a month; if you were in the Carleton Catholic board it would probably be a year and a half before you'd get an appointment to be evaluated and you'd likely not receive any remedial help. That was not as a result, obviously, of differences in the intention of the trustees or in the value they placed on dealing with these problems, but really as a result of the differences in resources available to the boards.

There are also different approaches to carrying out the same programs. Again, looking at the Catholic board, we had one school board that has all of its schools in a 50-50

English-French program; that's what you get if you go to elementary school. The other board essentially provided a quarter of the time French and later on provided immersion options. Those are quite different approaches to dealing with the same basic need and they would have to be resolved in bringing the boards together.

Similarly, there were quite substantial differences in culture between the boards that really reflected the differences in resources available but also the history of the boards and the leadership they would have.

There were also what I called the fairness issues, and I think these are key things that need to be considered here. Within the Ottawa boards you could generally have \$1,500 or \$2,000 a year more spent to educate your child than you could if you were in the Carleton boards. It's hard to discern a specific rationale for that kind of difference. On the other hand, if you were in the Ottawa board you would wind up paying lower taxes for education purposes than you would if you were in the Carleton board, essentially because the Ottawa boards had fewer children per household and more commercial assessment per household than did the Carleton boards. Those issues would tend to be or could be resolved to some extent through an amalgamation.

The other issue that came up was the question of trustee roles, and here I will depart a little from dealing with what I found back then to making a comment on the approach that's taken now, and it may perhaps be coloured by my own history as a local politician. Having thought that role had some value and provided some service to my community, I find it fascinating that we're going to ask an extremely small group of people to manage essentially a \$1-billion industry in Ottawa-Carleton and do it for \$5,000 a year while paying full attention to all the parent, student and community needs they're there to serve. One has to ask whether it's worth having trustees if that's the level of respect and purpose we're going to give to their efforts.

I found in 1993 that there were two major barriers to being able to implement amalgamations in Ottawa-Carleton. The first was the education financing regime, which at the time would have created a tremendous shift in resources between boards and would also have wound up actually reducing the province's contribution to education in Ottawa-Carleton, not something residents here would be overly thrilled to see. These may well be on the way to being resolved. What I said was that amalgamation shouldn't be looked at until education finance reform has been dealt with effectively. We haven't yet seen the new funding regime, but at least the current position appears to be that it won't be propertytax-based. One would expect that to largely eliminate the difference in availability of financing to various boards, making the system fairer and at the same time eliminating the barrier to amalgamation.

There's something else that might be of interest to you, and it's perhaps slightly beyond your scope, but as the new financing system comes into being — at the time I did a review of, what is it that drives education spending? Is it just that big boards spend more money? Is it that little boards spend more money? Is it that boards with special needs spend more money? Is it that boards with

higher assessment bases and greater access to revenues that spend more money?

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Interestingly enough, I found that at the elementary level a thing called the compensatory education grant had the strongest correlation to spending. The compensatory education grant is given based on the extent of poverty, assisted housing and other social measures within a board's area enrolment.

The second area of importance was assessment wealth. The fact that boards had more money wasn't the only reason they spent more money, but certainly if they had more money, they did spend more money. Similarly, at the secondary level, assessment wealth was the biggest driver of spending, French as a first language was the secondary one, and the compensatory education grant was the third one.

The reason I raise that is that as we look at going to a new system that's per capita based in some kind of sense, it appears there's a temptation to treat all capitas the same. While the old system provided benefits from living in a wealthy area which the new system should properly eliminate, somehow or other, and I don't know how or why, the old system also allowed for higher spending in areas with measures of higher social need. I certainly hope the new system will maintain that, hopefully on purpose rather than perhaps by accident as it may have in the past.

The Chair: Mr Bourns, could I ask you to summarize please?

Mr Bourns: Wrapup: The last major barrier I saw was labour issues, the cost of dealing with creating a collective agreement out of two sets of collective agreements. The tendency, and it was certainly borne out in the creation of the French boards in Ottawa-Carleton, is to wind up with a new agreement that provides the best of both contracts — the best benefits, the best pay, which may come from opposite contracts and result in higher costs overall.

At the time I looked at it, the cost of doing that would be about \$12 million for the public boards and \$3 million for the Catholic boards; in other words, more than enough to wipe out any savings available from eliminating duplication in the amalgamation process. If you don't find an effective way to lead to negotiating or otherwise arriving at labour agreements that cost the same as the current system, you will wind up losing all the benefits you may get out of amalgamation. I think that is an issue I haven't seen addressed in the legislation as it stands at the moment and very much does need to be addressed in the legislation at the end.

One very last comment: I sense at the moment a little confusion over roles and responsibilities. There's some level of acceptance that the various boards are going to have to get together and create a new one. There's a lot of waiting, I think, going on. Are people waiting for the Education Improvement Commission to lay down some rules and directions? Do the boards have the scope to go ahead and do things on their own?

It's already time that they should be well into the process to have a new government in place January 1. The sooner they can get clear direction to either go ahead

and do it or get the rules of the game laid down the more likely you are to have successful amalgamations.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Bourns. It would have been terrific to have much more time with you, but we are restricted to try to accommodate as many people as possible. Thank you for being with us this afternoon.

### NINA STIPICH

The Chair: May I ask Nina Stipich to come to the table. Welcome, Ms Stipich. We are looking forward to your comments.

Ms Nina Stipich: Thank you. My name is Nina Stipich and I have two children in elementary school in Ottawa. I am here as a parent who is very alarmed by the consequences of massive government cuts to public education and the implications of Bill 104 for democratic

control over public education in Ontario.

I have talked to many parents in my workplace, in my community and in my children's school yard and I think this committee should note that the alarm I feel is already widespread and will escalate dramatically as parents of two million children face, as early as next year, class sizes of 35 to 40, no junior kindergarten, no busing, no library technicians, no remedial reading programs, no mental health workers, no social workers. The list goes on and on. This committee is fully aware of the details and impacts of the massive cuts to Ontario's public education system resulting from last year's cut of \$400 million.

Mr Patten: Which board are your children in?

Ms Stipich: OBE. Parents know how these cuts have already affected the classroom, despite the government's election promise, and now the government has introduced Bill 104 which will give Queen's Park complete control over education policy and funding. Both governance and funding are being taken away from local communities.

Parents know that they have not been consulted and that this legislation is fundamentally undemocratic, because the process of consultation and public debate has not been allowed to take place and because the impacts of Bill 104 will result in rapid erosion of the public

school system in Ontario.

Parents know that the catastrophic changes in education being made by this government are happening too fast and with little planning. Parents also know that Mr Harris is so determined to fund his promised tax cut for high-income earners that he is ready to cut a further \$1 billion from the public education system in Ontario. I would like the members of this committee to ask Mr Harris, on my behalf and on behalf of all parents in Ontario, how much he values our children and their futures. If he takes a further \$1 billion of public money from education to finance tax cuts and destroys local control over education, the parents have their answer.

I keep asking myself how we got to this extreme point. Our public education system is being gutted overnight in this province and the voices of parents, teachers, school administrators, students and community leaders are being ignored. I was in Ontario in the months leading up to the election and I can state categorically that this government was not given a mandate to gut the existing public

education system in this province through massive cuts and sweeping legislation which is profoundly undemocratic in its impacts.

In fact, in the campaign statements, Ontario voters were promised more voice in government and public policy issues. To quote Mr Harris, "Ontarians must once again feel like citizens with a stake in the public life of their province rather than as spectators who pay the bills but have little say in deciding what government does,"

As a parent — there are thousands and thousands of parents like me across Ontario who think along these lines — I think Mr Harris and his government should honour their publicly stated commitment to principles of accountability and public participation in the decision-making process and withdraw Bill 104 because the public has not been consulted on issues in this legislation and the changes being proposed will make this government far less accountable in the area of education than any previous government in this province.

Bill 104 proposes to create an Education Improvement Commission consisting of provincial appointees who will be given the power to make decisions about all aspects of Ontario's education system. A handful of non-elected officials will be given complete power to make all decisions that will shape education in this province for

years to come.

The commission will control all changes to the education system with a mandate to decide unilaterally on education programming, curriculum as a whole, which schools will stay open and how much of our public school system will be privatized. The commission will function as a regulatory body, which means it can totally disregard consultations with the public and stakeholders in doing its business.

The legislation also states that anyone convicted of obstructing the commission will be fined and not allowed to be elected or act as a member of a school board. What does this mean? When parents, students, teachers or educators voice opposition to policies and actions taken by the commission, are we going to be obstructing the commission?

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Finally, to make it absolutely clear to the people of Ontario that this commission will function completely outside democratic controls, we are told that all decisions of the commission will be final and not subject to review by court.

The context in which this powerful commission will operate will also be dramatically altered by Bill 104. The amalgamation of present school boards into vast geographical entities and the elimination of two thirds of elected trustees will virtually eliminate accountability and the voice of local communities in decision-making on

education needs and funding priorities.

So what can Ontario parents conclude from this government's attack on the public education system in our province? We can conclude that Mr Harris and his government do not share the vision of the majority of parents in Ontario that a viable public education system with its fundamental principles of accessibility, equality and opportunity is an essential and integral part of democratic government and civil society.

For the parents and children of Ontario the public education system is more than just a government program that can be restructured and downsized to support tax cuts or spending in other areas. A viable and well-funded public education system is the great equalizer in our society. It gives all children — all children — access to high-quality education, and in this way gives opportunities to children of different backgrounds and means which they otherwise would not have.

I want to ask members of the committee for social development to take the message to Queen's Park that this government's assault on public education in this province is unacceptable and that the government has exceeded the mandate given to it by the electorate in

legislating Bill 104.

Parents will not stand by and let this government destroy the public education system because the human and social costs would be astronomical. We can live without the tax cut for high-income earners in Ontario, but we can't live without a vibrant, quality, public education system. Thank you.

Interruption.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, please, there will be no applause, no outbursts in the crowd.

Mr Wildman: I can applaud.

The Chair: Mr Wildman, I would appreciate your assistance. Ms Stipich, thank you very much and we appreciate the time you've taken and the very thoughtful comments you've put before us.

### LISA LYNCH

The Chair: May I ask Lisa Lynch to come forward. Ms Lynch, thank you very much for being with us.

Ms Lisa Lynch: Good afternoon. My name is Lisa Lynch. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today. I am a Carleton public board ratepayer, a parent of two teenagers, a member of Confederation High School council and of my community education committee.

My position is to essentially support the objectives of Bill 104. I hope the broad changes in the education delivery model and the financing methods will bring a new discipline to the process of providing educational services.

The ratepayers of Ottawa-Carleton are acutely aware of the differences in the costs of our children's education, depending on where we live and which system we support. Because of the number of school boards in our area, cost comparisons are often made by the media and concerned parent groups.

We believe that the differences in the quality of education do not correspond to the budgets of the local school boards. In fact, we take pride in the evidence of fiscal responsibility shown by the Carleton public board.

However, there are many improvements that can still be made and Bill 104 will drive these changes. I support the reduction in school boards, together with reduced responsibilities for the remaining boards, and a stronger role for the school councils.

There is a need for more training for school council members and for a clear direction from the Education Improvement Commission. My own experience has been generally positive, but I find some parents do not under-

stand the new roles and potential responsibilities of the school councils. I expect this will change over time, with the encouragement of the Education Improvement Commission. I feel there are limitations to what a school council can be expected to accomplish, given the volunteer nature of the groups.

Parents and many teachers have expressed concern over the sweeping changes and particularly the shift in power from the local area to the province. Centralizing such things as labour negotiations will, I hope, provide a level playing field which may reduce the perceived excessiveness of past contract awards and prevent the disruption of our children's education, as was my son's experience in the past few years.

Concern has also been expressed over the reduction in numbers of trustees. With the transfer of responsibilities to the province and the commission, and with input from school councils, it's likely that trustees will benefit from a reduced workload. There is a definite concern with the potential decrease in accessibility and accountability of

the remaining trustees after amalgamation.

The benefits and drawbacks of a centralized or standardized curriculum have been discussed at length in our community. There seems to be consensus that our children will be better served by a consistent, high-quality approach to learning and learning materials.

As we move towards more technology in the classroom and study labs, schools will continue to create, share and gravitate towards standardized products. For example, the availability of CD-ROM-based reference materials at home and in the school will encourage students and teachers to take advantage of this technology.

The opponents of this approach cite the lack of creativity, individuality and personal expression in the preparation of teaching materials. This may be so, but the opposite is all too true. As a parent, there is a concern with lack of consistency, quality materials and teaching aids. From class to class and year to year, our students are exposed to the best and worst of teaching materials.

Some schools and school boards have not been able to afford appropriate teaching materials or the latest in textbooks, or even enough textbooks to go around. Centralizing the curriculum, providing professional support materials and controlling budgets should reduce

these problems.

There are two local issues that I think Bill 104 could have impact on: first, the much-discussed money the province would like the Ottawa board to pay that after amalgamation could also become a Carleton board ratepayer debt; and near and dear to my heart, capital funding for provincially approved school projects should be accounted for separately so as not to adversely affect the in-classroom funding and penalize students in growing boards.

It's part of our culture to resist giving up any freedom. Certainly, Bill 104 removes some of what we perceive to be freedom. The key question is, do we get back more than we give up? If the bill will create more opportunities, better instruction for our children at the same or lower cost to the average ratepayer, I support it.

If you as a government and we as parents can reach our goals of more and better jobs, higher quality of life and more productive members of society, then stay on track. I hope the bill will help all of us meet these objectives.

Mrs McLeod: I was struck by something the previous presenter, Mr Bourns, told us about one of the differences between the Ottawa board and the Carleton board in terms of access to special education support. I think he acknowledged his work had been done a few years ago, but at that time a student would get special ed support in Ottawa in about a month and a half and in Carleton it might take a year and a half.

The question I would ask you is, how do you see the equalization then taking place? It would obviously cost a lot more money for the government when it takes over funding to equalize the services at the level the Ottawa board was providing. What do you see as being fair in

terms of equity for children in that?

Ms Lynch: I believe in special education for all students who require it. I'm under the understanding that some of the funding that is being talked about will be earmarked, that if there are students who need specialized education, they will get it, so that should help equalize it across all of the province.

Mr Wildman: I notice at one point you said that concerns had been raised because in some boards some schools didn't have enough textbooks and others had far more resources, and you expressed the hope that this legislation would bring an end to that kind of disparity.

How do you see that happening?

The minister has said amalgamation of boards and elimination of about half of the trustees would save \$150 million out of the total of \$13.5 billion spent annually on education. Do you think that amount of saving — while \$150 million is a lot of money, it's not much more than 1% — is really going to redirect into classrooms so there won't be situations where there aren't enough textbooks?

Ms Lynch: I can certainly hope so.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much, Ms Lynch, for your comments today. I gather you are, as you've said, a parent involved in parent council activities. Do you have any suggestions perhaps for the committee of what role the parent council within each school could take or should take?

Ms Lynch: I would like to say that they are certainly willing to take an increased role. At this stage it's very much at the beginning of a learning curve and you're going to have to realize that we have to learn and grow with whatever responsibilities do come down. We are not at this stage capable of taking a lot of responsibility. We have to learn and understand the full working of the schools, and at this stage we're just beginning to understand them.

The Chair: Ms Lynch, I want to thank you on behalf of the committee for coming here this afternoon and expressing your views.

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### JOINT COUNCIL OF OTTAWA BOARD OF EDUCATION ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The Chair: The Joint Council of Ottawa Board of Education Elementary and Secondary School Advisory

Committees, Mr Chambers. Welcome. We're happy to have you here before us.

**Mr Albert Chambers:** I guess that's the big challenge that any presenter has, to decide whether to give you the full bore or to leave you time for questions.

Mr Patten: Leave us time for questions.

**Mr Chambers:** I think I'll try and leave you some time for questions. I'll take Mr Patten's suggestion.

The Chair: The committee would appreciate that.

Mr Chambers: That's good. Interjection: Not his, though.

Mr Chambers: I'd more than welcome the questions

from the government side.

Joint council represents all 67 school councils in the OBE and, through our subcommittees and through the executive committee, joint council has given serious consideration to Bill 104. Today, we have one major recommendation and several other important ones.

Our primary recommendation to this committee is that when it reports Bill 104 to the House, it recommend, pursuant to standing order 107 of the Legislature, that Bill 104 be not reported. We fully understand that this is an unusual request, but we believe there are ample reasons to justify it and this afternoon we will present 12.

The first reason is, and you've heard this many times already — I've been here since just before noon — that Bill 104 represents only a small portion of the government's overall plan for radical changes, but the other components of this plan have not yet been disclosed or subjected to public scrutiny. As parents, we think we have the right to see the whole plan before we're asked to agree to support any one part of it. We know that you, as our elected representatives, haven't seen it all. We think you have the right to see the whole plan: funding, details on school construction, renovation etc, collective bargaining. You've heard these comments already this morning. That's the first reason why we think the bill should not be reported.

The second reason is that in its long title the bill promises "to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system," but none of its provisions will make a single, significant contribution to improving the education of Ontario's students. In our view, the bill is a Trojan Horse; as a gift, it is a dangerous fake. Its promises of savings, fewer politicians, accountability, effectiveness and quality are at best slick packaging and at worst purposefully deceptive.

The third reason is — and just before you broke, you heard an eloquent presentation on this from the trustees who were speaking to you — that Bill 104 will destroy rather than enhance local accountability. The new school boards will have virtually no power. So how will parents in this region or any region hold the minister and his nameless, blameless officials accountable?

Right now, if you want to contact a ministry office in this region, you have to leave a detailed voice mail and pray they'll call you back. Do you, as MPPs on either side of the Legislature, genuinely believe that you can deliver accountability within the context of the parliamentary system with respect to local school issues? Certainly not as well as local stakeholders dealing with locally elected trustees.

As flawed as local school boards may be — and I'll have you know that sometimes the OBE is a very flawed institution — they are at the very least here to be held accountable. Their power to directly influence both the financing and the development of local public school systems should be retained.

Our fourth reason is that by giving the province full control over education funding and by permitting the minister to adopt a grant-follows-the-student approach, this will undermine public education, lead to the funding of private education and create a two-tiered system of education in Ontario.

It's only one short step from "the grant follows the student to his or her school" to the charter school approach, which will severely undermine public education and the development of full service systems. Then from charter schools it's only one more short step to the voucher system and government funding of private schools. This will lead us into the two-tiered system.

Our fifth reason is that the case for amalgamation has not been established by this minister or by his predecessors. They've simply assumed that fewer school boards made sense, common or fiscal, but they have not proven their case.

Mr Bourns was just here before you. His study, which I gather he's slightly revised, concluded that the benefits would be "relatively modest" — I don't think he changed that comment today — and that there was the potential to achieve these benefits by the consortium approach. But he also said that amalgamation would require "significant effort and energy from the local education community, distracting from other priorities and requirements."

Now we'll all remember that the Crombie commission, the Who Does What panel, indicated that this region was making very good progress in implementing the consortium approach. They complimented the school boards in this area on it. Yet the province is proceeding with amalgamation anyway.

Our sixth reason is that Bill 104 sets an unrealistic time frame for amalgamation. Mr Bourns again recommended if amalgamation were to proceed — and when he did his report he had rejected it — that the board should have a five-year period to introduce any shifts in program, have access to the same total level of funding as they had prior to the amalgamation and be under no immediate obligation to provide transportation to programs in the other board's jurisdiction. But the minister wants it done here in 12 months. Why? Is this another crisis purposefully created?

I get to our seventh reason, which in the context of today's discussion is perhaps our most important. The campaign of misinformation on school costs and potential future funding levels engaged in by this minister and his officials is creating uncertainty, fear and unnecessary program slashing and paving the way for massive funding cuts.

On the surface, what Bill 104 proposes to do couldn't be simpler: We're going to elect new school boards and they'll start working on January 1, 1998. But under the surface the reality is quite different. Existing boards are acting on the impression that they must bring their funding in line with the minister's magic median effective

January 1, 1998. They are doing this without the benefit of thoughtful community input or foreknowledge of the funding model. Why?

Why has the government created this atmosphere? We can only surmise it's because the government doesn't want to tell us that it already proposes to take more than an additional \$600 million out of education in 1998. Our analysis of the Report on School Board Spending, 1995 to 1996, and the way the minister has presented that report leads us to the following conclusions.

The ministry published data on 117 boards. They indicated that the figure they produced, the \$6,359, was the median. Yet if you follow their analysis through, as we have done, it's not the midpoint in the board expenditures. There are 71 boards that spend more than that. There are only 46 in their analysis that spend less than that. The real median isn't \$6,359; it's \$6,547. It's

But is the median the appropriate measure? The minister talks about it as the average. It's not the average. The mean is the average. The mean, if you'd used those figures, is \$6,682. That's \$323 per student more than the median figure that the minister has been using these last several months. Multiplied out by the students we have in Ontario, that's \$622.8 million, nearly two thirds of Mr

In Ontario, that's \$022.8 million, nearly two thirds of Mr Snobelen's \$1-billion objective. You don't quietly write that amount out of the funding discussion without a reason. You do it to save money. You do it so people won't notice.

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already deceptive.

Joint council wants to emphasize that the provincial grants are insufficient for many school boards. We know Ontario is not providing quality education that its children deserve. However, we unequivocally reject the minister's proposed solution: paying only the median. The median isn't good enough.

If the minister really wants to bring accountability, effectiveness and quality to Ontario school schools, then

we're recommending that he do three things:

First, the minister should announce immediately that the provincial government will provide stable funding for the 1997-98 school year. That would take us through this budget cycle to the end of June 1998. That would provide stability to budget now.

Next, the minister should also announce immediately that the ministry will implement school-year-based funding for school boards commencing with the 1998-99 school year. School-year-based funding would create a rational budgeting process for both boards and the ministry.

Finally in this area, we recommend that the minister should complete his consultations on the new funding model — we support discussion of a new funding model — and have its results and the 1998-99 funding levels for each school board out by October 1 of this year, before the elections take place.

Our eighth reason for opposing Bill 104 is that school boards potentially will lose control over school facilities. The minister has talked about three possibilities: passing it off to municipalities, some other third party or the private sector. If the private sector is to have control, then over the long run schools, as tenants, will have to

generate a profit for the new owners. That's a new cost, more money out of the classroom.

If the schools are farmed out to municipalities—remember, we have 11 in Ottawa-Carleton—the future may be just as bleak. The capital costs of education might stay on both the residential and commercial tax bases. It might also mean that school construction will be competing with bridges and roads for scarce funds and the municipalities themselves will have to decide between the competing needs of the separate, public and Frenchlanguage boards.

For boards like ours with old and aging schools serving inner-city neighbourhoods — and I can walk to this meeting here; I know what the schools are like in this neighbourhood, this part of town — the loss of local control will be devastating. We're already years behind in renovations, and neither amalgamation nor divesting

controls will make it any better.

Our ninth reason, and you've heard a lot about this from trustees: The powers of the Education Improvement Commission are undemocratic, unprecedented and unnecessary. If there's a need for a body to facilitate amalgamations, if that goes ahead, then it would not need the power to approve budgets and contracts. It should be a facilitator.

Nor should its membership just be restricted to trustees and administrators. I must say that's the only recommendation in the list from the Ontario Parent Council that you heard this morning that I could possibly support of theirs. Their other unanimous support for Bill 104 does not represent the views that you've heard today from the organizations that represent school councils and parents. Therefore, any body or commission established to facilitate school board amalgamation should have limited powers and any local committees should have broad stakeholder participation and representation, including parents.

Our 10th reason is that Bill 104 does not clarify the government's intent with respect to programs that this and other local communities consider important. The OBE for many years has run an effective adult high school and basic adult education courses and for more than 50 years we've offered junior kindergarten. These are missing from the plan. They're important. Our community supports them. I'm sure the board, in its presentation, will be tabling the recent survey results that support them.

Our 11th reason: The minister has proposed to radically change both the delivery and the curriculum of secondary school and elementary school. We believe that he's launched more changes than the Ontario education system can absorb in the next few years, if you put Bill 104 aside.

Mr Skarica was kind enough to come at our invitation last fall to add this region to his consultations on high school reform. He listened to us. That was very important, but what he was listening to was his minister's proposals being ravaged. This community is not prepared to have half-baked ideas foisted upon us. Our kids must not be guinea pigs for another ministry experiment.

We insist that school reforms for elementary and secondary schools be properly prepared, piloted, evaluated and funded. This is where we, as parents, believe that the total attention of the minister and his officials, school boards, administrators, teachers, their federations and parents should be focused. Improving the quality, effectiveness and accountability of Ontario's education system should start with the curriculum and in the classroom. Education is about excellence, not mediocrity and median costs.

We're still waiting for the revised set of secondary reforms, which we understand may not now appear until June. We've seen nothing but a press release about the elementary reforms that are supposed to begin this September. With only three months left, we believe that the window of opportunity for elementary reform in 1997-98 has gone. As for secondary reform, joint council believes that the implementation timetable must be delayed for at least another year. We've communicated that to the minister and we're still awaiting a reply.

Our 12th reason, and one that you should also be concerned about, is that Bill 104 does not set out any standards or other measures by which the Ontario electorate can judge its success in delivering a more accountable, more effective and higher-quality education system.

How will we know when the minister has delivered? Will it be when our dropout rate goes down, when every grade 3 is reading at or above the grade 3 level, when the new grade 11 literacy tests show improved results? There must be measurable standards for a piece of legislation that promises so much. We would accept nothing less from this minister. You must accept nothing less.

We've provided you with 12 sound reasons for your taking decisive action on Bill 104. Our education system cannot afford to be diverted from its real priority.

Our sixth recommendation, which appears only at the end of the report, is that after Bill 104 is withdrawn or after you've reported that it be not reported, if the minister and the government intend to proceed with any major changes to Ontario's education system and its structures, they should lay out in advance all their plans and proposals and initiate a positive consultation process with all the stakeholders in the Ontario education system, particularly parents.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Chambers. You've exceeded your time. Your presentation was very interesting.

Applause.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, we have very limited time at our disposal. I appreciate that you like some of the things that are being said and you dislike some of the things that are being said. I would urge you in the interest of trying to hear everyone not to comment or delay the proceedings. We will not be able to get to everyone and I don't want to abridge the time that they have available to them.

Mr Wildman: Is it okay to applaud verbally?

**The Chair:** I really would appreciate some cooperation from the third party in this.

Mr Wildman: We were just applauding.

The Chair: You can feel free to express your opinion to them after they have made their presentation.

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### ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS' FEDERATION, OTTAWA DISTRICT

### WOMEN TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION OF OTTAWA

The Chair: Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation, Ottawa district, Mr Myers, Welcome.

Mr Larry Myers: I'm Larry Myers, Ottawa district president for the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation.

Mr Myers: My colleague is Padmini Dawson, with the Women Teachers' Association of Ottawa.

Thank you for the opportunity to allow me, on behalf of the 1,400 elementary statutory and occasional teachers of the Ottawa district of the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation, to address this committee hearing submissions on Bill 104.

My hopes are that holding hearings is a genuine attempt on behalf of the government to seek input and listen to concerns from education stakeholders. My fears, however, are that this is merely a token gesture to assuage public fears that the government is not listening and frankly couldn't care less about opinions or even hard evidence that goes against its direction. Many concerned citizens and groups have been denied access to this committee because of the very limited amount of time allowed for hearings.

The haste with which this bill is being pushed and the retroactive provisions in it display an arrogance and contempt for the system. January 13 is identified as the effective date for terms of a bill that hasn't been passed into law yet. There is a lack of structure and uncertainty about the rules for school boards to create budgets. Combining those factors with worries about terms of amalgamation and collective agreements is resulting in havoc and is creating angst in the system. There would seem to be an attempt to create a crisis to break the system so it can be fixed. I see little evidence of rational relaming.

Past studies on amalgamation indicated there were costs involved and that reducing the number of school boards would not save money in itself. Where is the proof that Bill 104 would satisfy the government's stated rationale of reducing expenditures? John Sweeney was invited here to a forum at the local public's expense in the last school year and was not able to clearly justify the need for amalgamation. The issue of savings through reduced administrative costs was raised. Mr Sweeney was not, however, ever able to clearly define administrative costs, but those costs seemed to include bills for principals, vice-principals and other essentials such as heat and light.

The thrust of Bill 104 seems to be to provide a cover for the removal of \$1 billion from the system. The results of funding cuts are already being seen. Cuts to special education services and the elimination of teacher-librarians in Ottawa have reduced the quality of education for our students. Uncertainty about rules the Education Improvement Commission would impose on school boards preparing budgets and the fact that an EIC ruling

could not be appealed is demoralizing and is creating chaos

Our board, the OBE, in a quandary, is proposing to lay off hundreds of teachers and other employees and severely slash programs. The board has the responsibility to draw up a budget, but it has its hands tied by this legislation as to how to effectively do it. The school board's budget provides the basis to determine staffing targets that affect programs for the school year starting in September. It's not clear if planning should be done for September to August or only until December. Transfer and staffing procedures that take weeks and should begin this month are on hold, creating uncertainty.

Teacher and board energies that should be going to providing quality programs for children are being sapped by uncertainty and dealing with seemingly constant criticism and rapid change. With Bill 104 looming, much work is now going into preparing for amalgamation.

Because of the haste with which this legislation is being pushed and the lack of framework, the problem is exacerbated. The status of collective agreements should be clearly recognized, and if this bill passes, new district boards should be directed to accept the liabilities of salaries and benefits. This should be made clear.

The size of the proposed Ottawa-Carleton school board raises concerns. With 80,000 students and a drive to centralize control in Toronto, one wonders about the ability of the system to effectively provide for the local

needs of our students.

While not opposed to the general concept of amalgamation, OPSTF Ottawa wonders why the haste, when so little detail has been provided. Why is there a rush to centralize control over education when the government seems pressed to keep up with promises already made on issues such as guidelines for school councils, curriculum and reports? Why demoralize the very people who will be needed to effect change?

Provisions of Bill 104 prescribing the EIC's mandate to conduct research in outsourcing non-instructional services raises alarm. An obvious target for what's euphemistically referred to as differentiated staffing is in the custodial and maintenance area. Concerns about

health and safety are naturally raised.

In conclusion, I reiterate worries about the speed with which this far-ranging bill is proceeding and the limited consultation provided for. I point out the lack of framework and suggest that guidelines enshrining provisions of current collective agreements and obligating new district boards to honour such terms in negotiations need to be stated. Replacing board employees by outsourcing or contracting out at reduced wages is near-sighted and should be abandoned as a tactic.

I raise concerns about the lack of democratic process, the vaguely defined but far-ranging powers of the EIC and the fact that its decisions could not be appealed. Proponents of democracy should worry that the commission would be responsible only to cabinet, and I suggest an appeal process be included.

I point out the chaos created by the uncertainty and the diversion of energies away from providing a sound education for our charges and into trying to sort out this process. This legislation should allow for boards to con-

duct their business and create budgets for the full school year 1997-98.

Finally, I draw attention to a major concern that as funding is reduced the students of Ottawa and the rest of Ontario will suffer as programs are cut, services are slashed and the quality of education is drastically lowered.

Ms Padmini Dawson: I am here on behalf of teachers, but especially on behalf of the students, who cannot be here to represent themselves, who depend on us for their

safety, security and learning.

Bill 104 is an act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of the Ontario school system. It will accomplish this by reducing the number of school boards, by reducing the number of trustees and by establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system.

This newly formed commission holds ultimate power. Neither the Regulations Act nor the Statutory Powers Procedure Act applies to this as yet untested and therefore unknown entity. No appeals are possible. Its decisions are final and this novice commission is only responsible to the Minister of Education and Training. In a time of increasing cries for accountability, the lack of

accountability here seems paradoxical.

The ministry, with its financial reform, will be allocating a per student allowance to each district board, which for the Ottawa board will be approximately \$2,000 less than before. However, this reduction does not meet the need of OBE students. Because study after study has shown that the Ottawa board has most of the subsidized housing in the Ottawa-Carleton area, this means a greater number of our children come from disadvantaged backgrounds. We know these youths have greater needs than those from affluent neighbourhoods, yet these needs are not being addressed. Larger classes, loss of special programs, the withdrawal of support services and the eventual cessation of focus on future funding not the answer.

In addition, local governments are struggling with the new responsibilities and increased workload with programs like welfare services, public health, child care, elder care, ambulance services and public libraries. All these affect families and therefore children.

Elementary students are our younger children, more dependent physically, intellectually and emotionally. The younger the student, the higher the standard of care that is required with respect to supervision, safety and general wellbeing. Elementary students are dependent on having their needs met each day by the teachers and other professionals. Increasing numbers of new Canadians, with unique social and academic needs, are entering our school system. As well, increasing numbers of children with learning challenges, emotional distress and physiological impairments are entering our classes.

In the midst of this, class sizes are growing, available moneys are shrinking and access to local community support systems is also decreasing. Larger classes are not the answer. If the needs of the elementary students are lost in the shuffle of Bill 104 while a non-accountable commission makes sweeping changes, the overall quality of education in this province will suffer and our youngest

generation will be the lifelong losers.

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We certainly support the idea of being frugal with tax dollars, but we don't want to be pennywise and pound foolish either. How much attention do you suppose a child can get with 35 others, many of whom have distinct identifiable and immediate academic, social, emotional or physical needs?

We welcome the idea of parent councils. These people are concerned individuals, but often have little or no training related to education policy, school budgets, classroom management, student discipline, curriculum

development and student achievement.

If a school functions smoothly with no serious problems requiring knowledgeable decision-making, then everybody is happy. But what if a school doesn't run smoothly? Who will be held responsible? Will it be the volunteers on the school council? What training, advice, resources, support and intervention can floundering school councils expect from the ministry? What will be the subsequent effect on the quality of education for every student in a school that has an ineffective school council?

We have schools where 75% of the population is new Canadians. We have communities where the parents are struggling to make ends meet. Often these same people are struggling with the new culture, new language, new issues. Are they concerned, caring parents? Yes. But do they have the skills, the background knowledge or the time to serve on school councils? Perhaps not.

The Chair: Ms Dawson, could I ask you to wrap up,

please.

Ms Dawson: Studies have shown over and over that the education of elementary students does not increase in larger classes or with less support services, yet this is being ignored in favour of political changes. We have not been shown the guidelines that establish the framework of Bill 104, or that show these measures will benefit our children. We have, instead, a very powerful, unproven commission being formed as we speak.

To me, Bill 104 is a step towards creating a new society, a society of haves and have-nots. Less public funding, loss of local control and no democratic accountability for ministry level decisions project a bleak picture

for the future.

The Chair: Thank you very much. On behalf of the committee, I appreciate both of you coming and sharing the views of your organizations.

### CYNTHIA BLED

**The Chair:** May I ask Cynthia Bled to come forward. Welcome. Thank you very much for being here.

Mrs Cynthia Bled: What I have here is a summary of a 28-page submission on Bill 104. Essentially, I support the changes to the financing and governance of education, changes I have been advocating since joining the Ottawa board in 1988.

The many transformations and bandwagon policies that have been introduced have not benefited the majority of students. I have battled to prevent diversion of public funds to establish and maintain race-based programs and activities at the Ottawa Board — this on the eve of the

21st century. My current battle against the priority accorded to capital construction over the classroom is on a slippery slope. Public apathy and the promulgation of misinformation are obstacles.

In 1993, in a personal report I wrote to constituents, "We need fewer trustees with wider electoral boundaries."

In 1988, there were so many programs and courses at the Ottawa board that we could not produce a precise list. Again I informed constituents that we need to remove "the taxing powers of [school] boards" in order to have some focus.

Using my own school board as reference, I see no change to date that would cause me to renege on the statements I made to my constituents. In spite, therefore, of strong resistance and organized protest to Bill 104, I

support in principle the initiatives of the bill.

Highlighting points of my submission on the role of education, which I think is more appropriately the role of a school, I see the school as an agency that provides the base for lifelong learning, for the bonding that defines a society, that perpetuates its goals and that prepares its members for the wider national and global society.

Our youth are faced with structural unemployment at a time when we are importing skilled workers. Too many of our youth flounder. We lack a collective purpose and

Bill 104 addresses this.

Of the taxing powers of trustees, Bill 104 would reduce disparities in resources available to students in the same community and across the province. The right to tax is a function of the responsibilities and therefore must be looked at in relation to the redefinition of the role of trustees under Bill 104.

On the status quo, I would say that education is the function that has historically proven to be most resistant to change in any society. It is not an accident that our Constitution has been repatriated and amended while education has essentially remained the same.

As far as the Education Improvement Commission is concerned, our school boards vary in their expectations and their reactions to the commission. There are boards right now which are entering into deepening debts which will be handed over to the district boards. The approach to be taken by the commission will be crucial. Clarification is needed on how existing and new debts will be addressed in the new structure.

Students and governance: Students — I have spoken to them — when not politicized are indifferent to who does what. Students' concern is to receive top-quality education.

There are loose ends under the bill. For example, January to June 1998, there is a hiatus there. We need guidelines and they're not there.

On differentiated staffing, we need guidelines. They're not there. Decisions at some boards are in limbo and

parents are caught in the confusion.

School councils: In my Personal Report to Constituents in winter 1996, I pointed out that depending on the composition of their school council, some children could emerge as losers. I can see a need in the future for an independent student-parent ombudsman emerging under that structure.

There's a possibility of a two-tier system developing, where schools in affluent communities will be able to supplement their funding, whereas those in poorer neighbourhoods will be left to do with what they have.

I consider it important that principals remain the

controlling figure in a school.

Open boundaries are important in decision-making. Students should be allowed access to schools of their choice in the new structure. Open boundaries are also recommended in order to have more rational use of facilities in the district board. We need guidelines as to who makes what decision.

School credits are also important. After the elimination of grade 13, will there be a cap on the number of credits?

Curriculum reform is nearing the status of an industry. This is a bad sign for efficiency. Many parents are at a loss as to why we have not just adopted the Alberta curriculum and modified it for local conditions, to minimize our administrative costs and at the same time accelerate change. As we take time to invent an Ontariobased curriculum, students are subject to constant change and their basic education needs go unaddressed.

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Enabling legislation is important. It needs to be thought about. The cost of amalgamation is uppermost in people's minds. We need to know: How will wages and benefits be determined? Will there be enabling legislation for new negotiations? What programs will be mandated? If there is differentiated staffing, will implementation be local, or how will these arrangements be addressed?

It is important under the new structure that employees be involved in the planning process. I am saying here that job-sharing and flexible hours should be accommodated,

even if this implies enabling legislation.

On school boards' spending patterns, in summer 1993 I wrote to my constituents and noted that the priority accorded to discretionary construction at the Ottawa board risked compromising the education of students as funds were diverted from the classroom into construction. Bill 104, with a wider constituency base and centralized funding, will address this issue.

We are in the situation of misinformation hysteria. Many Ottawa residents do incorrectly believe that the current provincial government has taken funds from the Ottawa board. Further, they are made to believe that the Ottawa board has been fiscally responsible in reducing its

budgets. It's inaccurate.

Unfortunately, the misinformation is fed by media such as the Ottawa Citizen, which published an article saying that the Ottawa board has reduced its budget by \$60 million. Although the newspaper has been provided with corrected information, it has not informed the public that there was an error. In this type of climate, it is impossible for the public to make informed judgments. Hence, we can see the concerns around us.

In conclusion, do I see any need for Bill 104? Yes, I do. Do I agree with the provisions of the bill? I agree with the overall thrust of the bill. It's the implementation that is going to make the difference. Do I have concerns about the bill? Yes, I do. I am concerned with implementation, I emphasize. I shudder at the absolute power which has been accorded to Education Improvement

Commission, yet I see a need, I see the reason why. I'm also concerned with the strengthened powers of school councils and the possibility for accelerated bandwagon policies.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Bled. You have managed to go right to the line, which is quite a knack. Thank you for being with us this afternoon. We appreciate it

### OTTAWA BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: I call upon the Ottawa Board of Education; Mr Best. Welcome. As you take your seat I'll remind you that you have 15 minutes for your presentation.

Mr Ted Best: Thank you, Ms Castrilli. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce our director of education, Ms Carola Lane. I'm very pleased to be here today representing all of the students, parents, staff and community who make up the heart and soul of the Ottawa Board of Education. We have many concerns about the effect on students of the education reforms proposed by Bill 104.

Let me take a few moments to tell you about the community that the Ottawa Board of Education serves. We have between 33,000 and 34,000 students in Ottawa, Rockcliffe Park and Vanier. Ours is basically an innercity clientele that includes many children and families with special needs. The vast majority of social housing units and rental units in the region are within our boundaries. We serve over 90 different language groups. We serve the majority of the region's single-parent families and immigrant population. Just in the ward which I represent, using the 1994 statistics from the city of Ottawa, 24.5% of our families come from subsidized housing, and close to one third of our elementary students are from poor families.

Bill 104 states it will "improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system." If the reductions in school boards were motivated by the betterment of education and students in the classroom, I'm sure we could readily agree with that legislation. We fear that the opposite will be true. We think Bill 104 will render public education less effective in our community.

Bill 104 aims to improve the accountability of the education system. However, we fear that a loss of local accountability and control of education will actually occur. On January 13 of this year, more than 150 years of tradition disappeared in one day. School boards lost real power, yet they may still be held accountable. Most important, I feel our ability to provide quality education to students has been drastically diminished.

The power of school boards to make decisions has been curtailed. The Education Improvement Commission will control many operational and financial aspects of locally elected boards of education. This EIC will have the right to approve and unilaterally amend a board's budget. Quite frankly, we trustees of the Ottawa Board of Education find this offensive.

Decisions used to be made locally by democratically elected trustees. Ultimately, if citizens weren't happy with our performance, they could voice their displeasure at the

ballot box. We have no such recourse with the EIC. This commission is a new level of bureaucracy, in our opinion. It's accountable only to the Minister of Education. It is more distant and less accessible to the local citizen.

Our student population we think is unique in Ottawa-Carleton, and not typical in Ontario. We have worked with our community to provide an education system which is responsive to local needs, accountable, demoratic and which we feel keeps students' interests in the forefront. As a result, we've heard the statements that people call us the Cadillac board of education. Let me be clear about this. We have not squandered our resources on waterfalls, marble floors or bought an interest in any local golf courses, I can assure you. Rather, we have used our resources to fashion an education system which meets local needs, including the following:

Our focus on future schools;

Our breakfast programs;

Our continued support of junior education and adult education, despite ministry changes;

Our special education courses;

The additional support we provide for our students in myriad ways: our mental health workers and Learning for Living program, our early French immersion, our psychologists, social workers and youth workers, to name but a few examples.

Our recent public survey shows that the Ottawa parent and non-parent taxpayers strongly believe in lifelong learning. They know good public education costs money. A majority of survey respondents support the continuation of junior kindergarten, although it's no longer mandated by this government. They know what the experts know: that when viewed from a long-term perspective, junior kindergarten and other early intervention programs actually save taxpayers money. Studies have shown that \$1 invested in early intervention saves anywhere from \$4 to \$7 of costs in later years, and that's a known fact.

The survey also showed very strong support for our adult high school, adult literacy and English-as-a-second-language programs. It is programs such as these which have helped Ontario to achieve the highest rate of high school graduation in Canada.

1700

Effective representation is another concern of ours. There will be some 75,000-plus students in this new amalgamated system. If there are 12 trustees, and I'm assuming we would get the maximum number of trustees in the amalgamated board, each one would represent some 6,200 students, from a diverse mix of inner-city, suburban and rural communities. I'm not sure how a trustee can meet this challenge.

The new district board in Ottawa-Carleton will serve a geographic area four times the size of Metro Toronto's, and I think Mr Marchese can relate to that. We urge that the greatest number of trustees possible be allowed for the new district board so that all our communities in Ottawa-Carleton will have someone who can reflect their

concerns effectively.

Another concern related to trustees is the new restrictions on who can be a trustee. The new rules forbid not only board employees but also their spouses from being trustees. This seems to us rather discriminatory in that it prevents a whole segment of the population from playing a role in the administration of public education, merely on the basis of how their spouse earns a living.

Similarly, it's important that we give the primary group concerned — our students — a voice in decision-making. Massive changes are coming, and our students must have a say. Our board has asked the minister to endorse the addition of a student trustee to each district school board.

Another key concern, related to effectiveness and quality, is that boards no longer have the ability to raise funds to meet local educational needs. The minister has said he made this change due to the irresponsibility of boards in raising property taxes. Well, I have news for you. This has not been the case with the Ottawa Board of Education.

For the last five years the average tax increase at the OBE has been 1%. Our mill rate is now lower than in 1992. In fact, we haven't had an increase in taxes for the past two years and we are also this year committed to a 0% tax increase. Yet we have managed to pay as we go for the renovation and reconstruction of aging school buildings. The OBE's debt load of a little over \$6 million is among the lowest for school boards in this province. I'd say this is a very fine record of fiscal prudence.

Now, instead of educational programming being locally decided, Queen's Park will decide how many dollars will be allocated for local education. I fear that the government, by its very nature, can't be as responsive as we to local needs, or as efficient. We will see a loss, not a gain,

of effectiveness and quality.

The OBE believes that Ontario's public school system must have the programs and services necessary so that all students have the opportunity to learn. We believe the province's new funding mechanism will not be responsive to local needs. How can it be, when the province has stated that funding will be equalized among regions based on a uniform cost per pupil? The province's new approach is a cookie-cutter approach, in my opinion. No matter how hungry they are, every child gets just one cookie, and any leftover dough stays at Queen's Park.

We urge the minister to release the grant proposal consultation paper as soon as possible. Actually, it's something that should have been done before now to allow for analysis of the impact on the students and to provide for real input from our public. It's our position that the funding model must be used to secure our programs and not to extract money from the public school system.

A top priority has to be minimizing the impact of the province's education reforms on our students. As we move to a new, larger amalgamated school board, staff, trustees and the community within the OBE and the Carleton Board of Education will be working together to keep the best interests of students at the forefront.

However, the province has provided no support or direction to assist us in this process. The OBE and the CBE are two very distinct boards, each with its own values and cultures. We want to be able to manage the transition in a way that is fair for our students, our parents, our staff and our community. School boards, like municipalities, should be given time to phase in the changes they face and time to adjust to the new realities.

We think it's essential that a mechanism and adequate funding be provided to assist in this merger, one which allows us to keep our programs that assist our students to succeed so that these students will continue to achieve this success in the years to come.

In short, we believe Bill 104 puts public education in jeopardy, and I'm sure you've heard that before. We also believe school boards have the responsibility to influence reforms in the best interests of students. That is why we've joined in the Ontario Public School Boards' Association's legal challenge of Bill 104. We feel that too much is at stake to sit silently on the sidelines.

We believe Bill 104 is seriously flawed and should be withdrawn. It has the potential to result in an education system that is less accountable, less effective, and provides less quality. If Bill 104 is to be passed, we urge the following amendments so that this legislation can do something to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system. I leave the following with you as recommendations:

Rein in the powers of the Education Improvement Commission. Do not allow it to overturn budgets passed by democratically elected school boards. Maintain the

autonomy of local education governance.

Second, provide for strong local involvement in local education improvement committees, and ongoing communication and consultation between these committees and the community.

Mandate student representation on all district boards. Establish a phase-in period of two or three years for reforms and transitional funding in Ottawa-Carleton. This will allow us to minimize disruption to students.

In addition, the following are also recommended so that the end result of all these changes will be improved

education for students:

Give real recognition of the special needs of inner-city students, new immigrants, special education students and adults in the new funding model.

Allow local school boards to levy taxes in order to meet local needs.

Allow boards to implement new means of delivery which will enable valued programs such as junior kindergarten to continue.

And please, release the details of the labour legislation and the funding model as soon as possible so that we can better plan for the up-and-coming period of transition.

The OBE is clearly not opposed to change. Our cooperative efforts with other school boards have reduced costs in a number of non-classroom areas. We have also demonstrated our willingness to work with the government to implement change. We are more than willing to do things differently if the end result, the ultimate impact, is improved education for all students in this region.

We know that a strong public school system is essential in creating and preserving a democratic, productive and humanitarian society. We hope your message to the

government will be that you agree with us.

I am now going to table at this committee for consideration the summary of proceedings from our alternative hearings held last week. These represent the thoughtful contributions of many members of the community who could not be here today.

Now, with the few minutes I have left, either our director of education or I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.

The Chair: Mr Best, in fact you have no minutes left. but we do thank you for coming here and putting forth the position of the Ottawa Board of Education together with your colleague. Thank you so very much.

### KIRSTEN KOZOLANKA

The Chair: I ask Kirsten Kozolanka to come forward. Good afternoon, and welcome. We're pleased to have you with us.

Ms Kirsten Kozolanka: Thank you. Madam Chair, members of the committee, my name is Kirsten Kozolanka. I'm speaking to you today as a parent of two children at the Ottawa Board of Education but also as a former student at the Ottawa board, from kindergarten right through to grade 13. I should mention that the signature of Bill Davis is on my high school diploma as the Minister of Education at that time.

On January 13, I read with great interest the announcement by the Minister of Education and Training on the restructuring of the Ontario education system. The

ministry's media release began as follows:

"Residential property taxpayers will no longer be required to bear the burden of funding education under a new reform package that will enhance student performance while cutting bureaucratic duplication and waste."

That in a nutshell encapsulates this government's

attitude towards public education.

There could be many potential reasons for undertaking a comprehensive reform of a system of education, but the one the minister and his government have chosen to highlight is this: Their supporters don't want to pay taxes. I give them credit for honesty of intention. They admit they are tearing up the system, not through any pedagogical need, but simply because education costs money and they don't want to pay it. This no doubt explains why they have already removed \$1 billion in funding from the education system.

Yet at the same time their expectation is that Ontario's students will miraculously begin to perform better, although it is never actually explained what that means or how it can be achieved. These plucky students will manage this while deprived of library resources, special education support, transportation to and from school, speech pathologists, reading recovery programs and myriad other entitlements deemed by the Minister of Education to be outside the classroom and therefore not part of a streamlined system.

The duplication and waste the minister speaks of are fanciful, but they are popular tools to use to gain public support for cutbacks to education. Using disturbingly incomplete numbers, the minister can and has deliberately manipulated public opinion and manufactured a crisis in

Late in the ministry media release, the government drops the other shoe. New legislation is to be passed that will require every school to have an advisory school council. This, says the minister, is to give parents a greater direct voice in education.

So here's the critical path: Less money goes to education. Programs get cut. Staff lose jobs. Volunteers take over. And, miraculously, students do better.

What's wrong with this picture? For one thing, it's distressingly familiar. The Mike Harris government didn't come up with it on its own. In selected jurisdictions in industrialized nations over the last 10 to 15 years, governments have downsized and downloaded responsibility for education. Great Britain under Margaret Thatcher, New Zealand and Australia, some jurisdictions in the United States and Ralph Klein's Alberta have all undergone the same process.

These governments have based their actions on claims of inadequate, broken systems that require massive restructuring. Not coincidentally, this restructuring without exception comes with a substantial loss of education funding. It inevitably results in systems so devolved that individual schools headed by volunteer community boards do the job previously held by school boards and governments. It's consistent with a management theory of education called site-based management.

The first step to a system of site-based management is mandating compulsory local entities such as advisory school councils. Now, parental participation is a valuable resource, but one that must be used responsibly. Using parents to take the responsibility for education without the corresponding control, such as proposed here, is not responsible. If the experience of other jurisdictions holds true, the spectre of increased parent involvement is being used here to encourage acceptance of an otherwise very troubling restructuring package.

The last step to site-based management is the creation of charter schools, which are in effect private schools that operate with public money. Again other jurisdictions have led the way, so to speak, by moving quickly from the school council phase of devolution to charter schools. When this government goes ahead this spring with its plan to establish a per pupil funding scheme, it has said it will also be exploring allowing parents to take their per pupil money and apply it to the school of their choice. The portability of per pupil funding is a vital enabling tool in the implementation of charter schools.

That, without exaggeration or hyperbole, is where the Mike Harris restructuring is headed. It's all in there in the media release of January 13, and it will mean the end of public education as we know and value it.

Site-based management is a difficult concept to unravel. On the one hand it appeals to those fiscal conservatives and back-to-basics educators who see it as a way of controlling costs at a time of reduced education dollars. Yet it also appeals to those progressive educators and community members who value grass-roots participation and decision-making. And all of us can get caught up in the promise of educational choice.

But if site-based management is good for education, why then is it never applied in good economic times when there isn't a backlash against public services and applied instead only in times of fiscal restraint? Rather than an educational response to redress a set of pedagogical or other circumstances, governments use the legitimate desires of parents for grass-roots involvement to impose a new education ideology in the guise of reform.

In fact, site-based management proliferates when an education system experiences a crisis of confidence. If you repeat the ideological mantra that the system is broken long enough, people stop trusting their own experience and begin to lose faith in the system. With Bill 104, our Minister of Education has created just such a crisis.

If this government is allowed to continue down this path and if the public ignores the lessons of other jurisdictions, this is what my research tells me we are in for:

Increased, not less bureaucracy, as schools are faced with new, more bureaucratically intense processes and new government agencies spring up to administer the new system;

Inflated cost of schooling, as schools incur more costs to make their programs more attractive to potential students:

Less equality of opportunity, as grants are allotted to "better" schools and parents put their per pupil money into these same schools, thereby increasing inequities; corporatization of schools, as school councils look for funding beyond governments;

Chronic underfunding of education, as the public comes to accept that government will not fund education adequately;

Untrained decision-makers, as volunteers without adequate training take on pivotal school roles.

Less accountability, as the role of the elected trustee diminishes and local taxpayers are relied on less and less to play a role in educating children;

Vertical loading, as teachers take on additional roles; Vulnerability to special interests, as community members seek access to school councils:

Privatizing education, as the system dissolves into a series of individual experiments;

Maintaining the new status quo, as fewer resources and more constraints on time mean authentic education reform will never take place.

Those are some of the lessons of site-based managed school systems in other jurisdictions as they have evolved or been pushed into chartering.

Overall, the path this government has chosen means the collapse of public education and its fundamental principles: accessibility, opportunity, equality.

Despite last week's editorial in the Ottawa Citizen, which promotes the findings of a conservative American think tank, schools in Mike Harris's Ontario will be élitist and exclusionary. The evidence shows they will reject some types of students, such as those with special needs or those who aren't bright enough, and serve only part of the community: those who can afford it. It happened in Britain, it happened in New Zealand. As of September 1995, Alberta opened its first charter schools. It can happen here.

The final irony is that the stated goal of all this restructuring, as we have seen in the ministry media release, is supposedly to enhance student performance. Well, it just doesn't work that way. There is no evidence to support measurable achievement gains in restructured charter-type schools, but there is a lot more time spent on testing, assessment and reporting.

The Chair: May I ask you to wrap up?

Ms Kozolanka: Certainly. I'll read a little faster.

Even proponents of chartering are hard-pressed to demonstrate through their research any consistent and widespread advantages to this system. Only in the very poorest districts of New York and Chicago, areas renowned for their poor quality of education and that do not fit the profile of Ontario schools, have there been cautious gains, but then, there was nowhere to go but up.

The conclusion must be that site-based management is more trouble than it's worth, unless turning a viable public education system into a marketplace for the rich

and the powerful to graze is the ultimate goal.

Other jurisdictions have undertaken rigorous, economic-based experiments in education restructuring, such as the one proposed through Bill 104, and failed. We should feel no compulsion to repeat their mistakes. The government should withdraw Bill 104.

The Chair: We appreciate your coming forward and bringing your views to the committee. Thank you very

much.

1720

### JOSEPH GRIFFITHS

**The Chair:** I ask Joseph Griffiths to come forward, please. Welcome. Thank you for being here. You have 10 minutes to make your presentation.

Mr Joseph Griffiths: Let me start by saying that I'm 23 years old and I feel a little outgunned and outclassed by people like Mr Best, who came here to speak on behalf of the education system. I'll do my best, but I must state that I don't pretend to know all the facts and figures associated with the education system.

I had intended to come here today and give a fancy speech full of facts and figures, outlining in detail what I believe to be wrong with Ontario's education system, but the more I pondered what I had to say here, the more I realized that facts and figures cannot fully explain why

we have an education crisis in this province.

I have watched with great interest the heated debate over the government's plan to change the education system. Through it all, I have heard the testimony of outraged parents, children, trustees and teachers, and I assure the members that I understand their frustration. You see, not so long ago I was a member of our broken education system. I played the role of the student, that one member of the system whose existence demands responsible decisions from those who control our lives.

I don't usually like to tell stories, but if truth be known, it seems that the only stories that don't get told are the ones by those who are hurt or are being hurt by the current education system. I can tell the members that from grade 9 to grade 11 I skipped no more than three days of school. I was for all intents and purposes a good student, with a strong interest in learning. But like so many of our students, I grew restless and bored, started skipping more classes, became a nuisance to my parents and subsequently left home at the ripe old age of 17. This is not so unusual, I guess, except that I still maintained a B-plus average.

Soon after leaving home, the school board released me as a student, offering the number of days I'd missed as a testament to why I should be ejected. By and large, I can

accept the rules. What I cannot accept, nor should any of us accept, is a system that is more concerned with fancy buildings, big paycheques and their own lives, while a student who had maintained an above-average grade, despite how many days he had missed, should be let go lock, stock and barrel — no consultation, no support and no interest.

I have grown up since then. I went back to school and now hold a BA in political science, but, honourable members, not without a fight. Beginning with school boundaries that precluded me from going to school in certain jurisdictions, through battles between gangs over lunch-hour and a whole host of other problems, I went back and got my high school education.

Let me state that I do not blame the teachers. Most, if not all, give a great deal of time, effort and energy to their jobs. By and large, most teachers do their jobs well. The problem, you see, is twofold: not enough money and

too much bureaucracy.

The day I left school — the day I was ejected — the principal offered no advice, no guidance, no consultation. There was no discussion as to where I should go, and I stress again that I hadn't missed a single day of school from grade 9 to grade 11. Through problems at home and various other problems in my life, I left home at 17 and then went to school and ended up missing more classes. As a result of that crisis, the education system let me go.

I'm not suggesting that the school owed me anything, but what I am suggesting is that when we're paying people in the school, such as consultants and therapists and various other mediators, from vice-principals and principals, to school board trustees, it seems very odd and strange to me that I should be let go, released, without so much as a by your leave. I can tell the members that I walked down the corridor with my law professor and she was very much confused about why — the simple fact that I had a B-plus in her class — there was nothing she could do and nothing I could do. The school's decision was final.

From there, I tried to go back and get my high school degree and I can assure you that the fight I had to go through between various school boards in this city telling me that my parents lived here and I lived there: "You don't pay your taxes in this riding. You can't go to school here." I had to change and move houses etc. To make a long story short, I finally made it back to school, but not without having to deal with a whole layer of bureaucracy, which instead of trying to make my life easier, easier for me to get my education, I was pushed aside because nobody had the time and nobody had the interest.

In a day and age where kids need an education more than ever to survive, we must remember that the education system was not established to give adult Ontarians a job or to create large architectural masterpieces or to provide an endless social event for our children. No, the system is about education. Parents shouldn't and don't care how. It is clear that our current system is failing.

I do not pretend to know all the facts. I should say I am not paid enough to know the intricate details of board management spending. But what I do know comes from having lived it. When the education system spits out

students year after year, I can say clearly that I did not receive an education worth the dollars my parents put into it. The fact is, the education system failed me and many like me. I am not here to represent those who have a vested interest in the system, those of the bureaucracy, those of teachers, those of parents. I am here to represent the students who, in my opinion, don't get heard often enough.

Mr Skarica: You gave a very compelling presentation, sir. Thank you. How would you suggest we fix what you went through, the fact that no one really dealt with your

problem?

Mr Griffiths: Like I originally said, I don't necessarily disagree with the rules that ejected me from the school. Lord knows that there have to be some principles and guidelines which students have to adhere to in order to get an education. On the other hand, the problems I faced after I left the school and the fact that the school paid absolutely no attention at all to my previous record or circumstances I was enduring, despite the fact that we have guidance counsellors in our schools who are paid umpteen dollars to look after that very fact, seems very odd to me.

Furthermore, it seems to me that having two school boards in a city the size of Ottawa is a complete waste of money, specifically when it keeps students like myself, who end up in a cross-boundary kind of situation, out of school simply because nobody wants to take the time to give me an opportunity to get my education. It seems to me that having one school board as the government proposes, amalgamating school boards and reducing the bureaucracy, is one of the very first steps.

I don't know if it will work. I can say that quite clearly. I don't know whether Bill 104 will work and I don't think anybody does, but what I can tell you is currently the system isn't working. We have a bloated bureaucracy. We have people who are not interested in students, and that's what they're paid for. I suggest this is a good place to start, and if it doesn't work, we all have a vested interest in trying to keep working until we

find something that does.

Mr Patten: I appreciate your presentation today and your plea to express a point of view for the students, I really do. It sounds like you're a very tenacious person who has persisted in spite of some of the obstacles that I agree should not be there. I would submit, though, that some of those could be addressed one by one. You can relate the cross-border issue you identified, the degree of acceptance, to many situations even in universities and colleges, the acceptance of standards in courses and things of that nature.

I'm curious to know what you believe 104 will do to address the concerns you have. In my opinion, it will lead to bigger bureaucracy that is more removed from the

relationship with the student.

Mr Griffiths: My answer to that is quite clear. I'll address the first thing you said and then perhaps I'll address the second. Having watched the debate for many years and having watched those with a vested interest in maintaining the status quo, I don't think it would make a difference whether the government implemented a series of amendments or whether it introduced them one

by one. Those who have a vested interest in maintaining the system as it is will dig in and fight it every step of the way. I don't think this is about the fact that the government has proposed a package, Bill 104, that changes a number of things at once. In my opinion, that's probably the best way to do it. It's the fastest, most effective, cleanest way to get the job done.

As for removing me further from the system as a student, well, I was already removed from the system. It certainly couldn't be much worse than it was. I would suggest that having one layer of bureaucracy, despite the fact that it would be large — granted, it would be a mega-school board, no doubt about that. Ottawa-Carleton is a fairly large area with differing needs. On the other hand, quite clearly, those who are there now are not doing their jobs. I don't mean any disrespect to any of the school board trustees or educators in the room, but the fact of the matter is, they're not.

This is why Parliament has committees. You come into committees because a smaller group of individuals is more likely to get at the problem than a series of large bodies. It seems to me that having fewer school board trustees is going to be more effective because it's fewer people at the table who have to be heard and they're more likely to make a decisive, cohesive decision.

1730

Mr Wildman: I want to thank you for coming to make your presentation and to do it in such a passionate way to describe your situation and that of other students who

have experienced the problems you had.

I'd like to follow up on the question raised by Mr Patten. Many have analysed Bill 104 and said it will concentrate decision-making in the bureaucracy at Queen's Park rather than in the larger school boards, which would then be less accountable to local needs. Let me preface this by saying we all have vested interests; students, teachers, parents, trustees, administrators, taxpayers all have vested interests. The most important of those interests, though, in the education system must be the students', and that's why I appreciate your presentation.

I'm just wondering whether it was a matter of bureaucracy that failed or whether what was needed was an alternative approach for you and students like you, perhaps an alternative school where you might have been able to pursue your own interests at your own level and capability — obviously, you were very capable; you had a B+ average — rather than having to be fit like a cog into a wheel that you didn't fit into or didn't feel at the

time you fit into.

Mr Griffiths: The answer to your question is I guess again kind of twofold. First, I would say about Queen's Park that Ontarians spend a great deal of money every single year paying public officials to do specific jobs. Each year we go to the polls not once, not twice, but three times to elect three different layers of bureaucracy to make the very same decisions for us. To say that Queen's Park is less capable than the school board in my local area at making those decisions seems rather odd when it's quite clear that the people in my local area are not making the necessary decisions.

The province has transferred less money to the school boards, and instead of reducing spending they have increased taxes. These are not the responsible management decisions that need to be made by the people we put in charge. Do I trust the people at Queen's Park any more than I trust the people at the local school board down here on Metcalfe? No, I don't, but I have to trust somebody. We've tried system one and we might as well try system two. Like I said, I can't guarantee it will work.

However, the answer to your second question is yes, it's possible that a student like myself might have done a little better or maintained a steadier presence in the school system had I been offered special programs and so on, but it still doesn't change the fact — what I find very disappointing is not that I was bored with the education system, because many students are. What I find distressing is that those very individuals whom my parents paid to ensure that I got an education were the very same people who were hampering me and preventing me from getting that education. That is the problem.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Griffiths, for

coming here and sharing your story with us.

Madam Chair, on a point of order: I would like it to go on record that I have presented a letter I received from Irma Lee Dostaler, chair of St Clare School council. Every one of us received it this afternoon. I just want it to go on record that you all received it.

The Chair: I believe it has been distributed, Mr

Lalonde. Thank you.

### PRESCOTT-RUSSELL COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: I call on the Prescott-Russell County Board of Education; Donald Farrow. Welcome. I'd ask you to introduce your co-presenter.

Mr Donald Farrow: The presenter will be Mr Allan

Anderson, the chairman of our board.

Mr Allan Anderson: Madam Chair, members of the committee, the Prescott-Russell County Board of Education recognizes that fewer school boards are a reality. With that in mind, the wish is to make amalgamation work for the best of the students. We hope that if we do this right, the students shouldn't even notice changes are occurring.

A funding model which treats a student in Russell the same as a student in Scarborough is a long-overdue improvement. The Prescott-Russell county board has long been at a competitive disadvantage because its coterminous board has had a lower mill rate due to the special minority language grant and the French-language equivalency grants which they receive. The equalization of grants and the removal of education from the residential tax base will put us on equal footing with our neighbours.

The English section of our board is slated to amalgamate with the present Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry English section board, the Leeds and Grenville County Board of Education and the Lanark County Board of Education. Our view is that this new board covers an excessively large, irregularly shaped area and does not recognize local realities. Our board cannot see how assets and liabilities can logically be distributed over 11,759 square kilometres.

This unwieldy, large area has forced us to discuss a regional office model for the sake of communication with parents and the need to mitigate the economic impact on local communities if the board of education were to withdraw from an area. We believe it is important that a local presence remain while we wrestle with the long-term challenge of how to retain and spread the best practices of all of the partner boards. I will attempt to summarize the concerns of the Prescott-Russell County Board of Education and the relative advantages of a second look at the eastern Ontario boundaries.

First, the distance factor: Having expected boundaries similar to those recommended in the Sweeney and Crombie reports, ie, the fusion of our English-language component with that of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, we were shocked to learn that English public education in not two but four eastern Ontario boards would now be merged. As the proposed legislation now stands, English instruction in the existing four boards is to be regrouped under a single new board having approximately 11,759 square kilometres, 37,799 students, 90 elementary schools and 23 secondary schools. The logistics involved for trustees and administrators of the proposed territory to maintain an adequate level of personal presence and oversight are daunting, to say the least.

Our board is convinced that no matter how dedicated and energetic they might be, it will be impossible for the probable one, or at most two, trustees allocated to Prescott-Russell to represent our electors in any meaningful fashion. Calculations made by one of our proposed partners puts the distance from one end of the new board to the other end at approximately 250 kilometres, and that by the most direct route. A single round trip to the four administrative headquarters of the existing boards, each of which is generally central to its territory — that is, in Perth, Brockville, Cornwall and Hawkesbury the various board offices are now appropriately located — is approximately 450 kilometres. This is considerably further than a round trip from Huntsville up in the Muskoka district to the heart of downtown Toronto. Even more problematic for administrators responsible for the day-to-day oversight of schools, the time required for a return trip to several of the schools within the new district board would be well over two hours from any central location in the territory.

Second, a matter of equity: We now realize that the proposed new configuration planned for us is larger than any of the other proposed new district boards in southern Ontario. Indeed, some other new configurations are significantly smaller both in geographic area and in number of students. For example, Huron-Perth would comprise 20,768 students and a territory of 5,593 square kilometres. Bruce-Grey would have 24,595 students in an area of 8,553 square kilometres. In the case of the new district board of Muskoka, Haliburton and Victoria, the dimensions are similar to those proposed for us, that is, an 11,275-square-kilometre range. However, that board will be serving just slightly over half the number of students our four-board unit would, and this obviously means fewer schools, less staff and a lesser volume of administrative oversight required.

Third, a viable alternative: As originally recommended by the reports of John Sweeney and David Crombie, the Prescott-Russell board, English section, was targeted to merge with its counterpart in Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. If that model, arrived at with significant input from the stakeholder communities, could now be endorsed by your ministry, it would create a far more equitable unit, comprising 15,000 students in an area of 5,305 square kilometres. The other two boards involved, in this case Lanark and Leeds and Grenville, would also be better served by such an arrangement, since their total enrolment would then be 22,700 students and an area of 6,454 square kilometres.

### 1740

Both the Prescott-Russell board and our neighbouring Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry board have comparable levels of per pupil expenditure. True, an average of per pupil spending between our two boards puts us somewhat above the provincial median; however, this fact also reinforces the commonality of obligations and priorities shared by our two boards. Our clientele is highly similar; for example, we both serve high levels of special education and social needs. Moreover, due to our locations on the Quebec border, there is a high demand for French-as-a-second-language programming and our graduates must be equipped to compete for employment in Ottawa-Carleton, where bilingualism is a key determinant.

It should be noted that the Prescott-Russell County Board of Education per pupil statistics on the charts and tables in A Report on School Board Spending 1995 to 1996 reflects 1996 spending for all our schools, that is, both French — FL1 — and English students.

Despite the complexity of our two-section, unified budget, we are confident that our per pupil rate is moderate, given our emphasis on quality FL2 instruction, our dispersed population, requiring transportation, and the high number of special needs children we serve. An amalgamation of Prescott-Russell and Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry English section would permit us to maximize the shared use of specialized services we both now offer while leaving Lanark and Leeds and Grenville free to address the priorities which are specific to their particular region.

Fourth, partnerships already forged: The Prescott-Russell County Board of Education has been proactive in the area of partnerships and shared initiatives at least since the early 1990s, if not earlier. Over the years we have realized important savings and increased services available to our students by:

Harmonizing our computerized transportation policies and bus routes with those of our coterminous French Catholic board, a major success which has brought a \$244 drop in per pupil costs, from \$1,161.97 in 1991 to \$917.50 in 1995;

Working with a local women's shelter to enhance education on family violence issues;

Sharing a joint health and safety officer with our two coterminous Roman Catholic boards;

Partnering with the children's aid society to provide school-based child protection services at those of our schools which need them the most; Setting up a joint section 27 education/treatment program with our coterminous English Roman Catholic board;

Collaboration with our SD&G neighbours in teacher training/professional development initiatives to avoid duplication and enhance opportunities;

An agreement with Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry of many years' standing which gives our teachers access to their excellent resource centre of printed and audiovisual teaching materials.

More recently, we have entered into a promising joint computer venture with the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry board, namely, the TIPP program. Now that the moratorium on eligible capital projects has been lifted, we have arranged to share the services of SD&G's building engineer to supervise the two English school construction and expansion projects approved for our board.

As you can see, we have invested much time and energy designing partnerships with organizations in our own region which either offer services we need or else share priorities in common with our own. An amalgamation linking only Prescott-Russell and Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry could allow many of these other partnerships to continue and perhaps even be expanded.

Moreover, with the ministry placing increased emphasis on outsourcing for certain services and expertise, the most cost-effective source of such services may not necessarily be a private firm. One of the client school boards themselves, being already familiar with the turf, could provide certain services to neighbouring boards, whether public, separate, English or French, for an appropriate fee for service. Here again, where travel and distance are involved, relatively close geographic neighbours will be the best candidates for these sharing arrangements.

In summary, we hope that through the information provided in these few pages we have been able to convey the openness that exists in our board towards more innovative and cost-effective ways of delivering education. This board has found much that is positive in the changes your government is contemplating, especially in the area of funding and the insistence upon equality of program opportunities for students right across the province.

Nevertheless, when implementing landmark legislation such as the Fewer School Boards Act, we urge you to ensure that these changes take place with appropriate recognition of geographic needs and realities, as well as sensitivity to cultural affinities and already existing cohesiveness within the different regions, these being key factors in the success of any marriage, be it between individuals or school boards.

A concept already familiar to you but one which bears mentioning is that there is a delicate balance between maximum size, seeking economies of scale, and optimum size, for best use of human and financial resources. We strongly believe that a marriage between Prescott-Russell and Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry would prove far more advantageous on all counts than the four-board model currently being contemplated.

The directors and/or chairpersons of the Lanark, Leeds and Grenville, Prescott-Russell, and Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry boards have met on several occasions to discuss the implications of a four-board merger. Although these talks have reinforced in us all a high regard for each other's operations, the more we analyse the mechanics of such a move, the more convinced we are that it would either create or exacerbate many more problems than it would solve, both from the financial and quality-of-service standpoints. The impact upon services also includes contact with the broader community, those sometimes forgotten taxpayers who have a keen interest in education, even though they are not directly involved with one of our schools.

In summary, the Prescott-Russell County Board of Education, English education, favours joining with its counterpart in the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry County Board of Education because of our similar educational and social needs and our past history of cooperation. We greatly respect the Lanark and the Leeds and Grenville boards, but we are convinced that joining with those boards would not in the foreseeable future produce any tangible benefits. Thank you for the opportunity to make this presentation.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr Anderson, and thank you, Mr Farrow, for coming as well. There will be no time for questions, I'm afraid, but we do appreciate

your views.

Mr Wildman: I have a question for the parliamentary assistant. Can he clarify for the committee whether it's going to be possible for the request of the Prescott-Russell County Board of Education, English section, to be responded to by the government? In other words, is it possible to increase the total number of boards in this province proposed under Bill 104; that is, instead of the amalgamation of four boards in this area, shown as number 26 on the proposed map given out by the minister, is it possible to have two boards in that area rather than one? Is it possible or not?

Mr Skarica: Mr Jordan has asked the same question. Ultimately, it will be for the minister and the cabinet to decide. I imagine it would be possible if as a result of these hearings we heard that it wouldn't make sense to have four boards go into one as opposed to two sets of

two boards.

**Mr Wildman:** This has significant relevance not only for this area but also for all of northern Ontario.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): I had a similar question. Probably the parliamentary assistant could arrange a meeting to look at that situation. Even the other board brought that to our attention, and the Lanark and Leeds county board also brought it to our attention. I really feel there was probably lack of time for consultation in this case. When you look, those points were very clear in there. With the geographic area we are going to be serving with one district board, I think it would be worthwhile to look at it very closely.

1750

### JUDY CAMERON

The Chair: Would Ms Cameron please come forward? Ms Cameron, thank you for being here. I want to assure

you that this exchange will not impact on the time you have; you have 10 minutes for your presentation.

Ms Judy Cameron: I'd like to thank the committee for giving me the opportunity to speak. I'll start by introducing myself and giving you an idea of the context in which I will be speaking.

My name is Judy Cameron, as I'm sure your schedule has told you, and I have an interest in Bill 104 primarily as a parent of three children, two of whom are in the OBE school system at present and one who is at preschool but will be entering the school system in the next few years. I am also a taxpayer who relocated to Ontario and particularly to Ottawa in part because of the high quality of the school system in Ottawa. I would like to do everything I can to ensure that high-quality system is retained.

In addition to these interests, I have some skills and experience which I think could contribute to the Bill 104 process, or at least give me a good understanding of the process. I am currently working as a policy analyst at the federal Department of Finance, so I am extremely familiar with the policy development process. Every day I work on developing new policies, consulting on them, seeing how they can be implemented.

I also have an MBA in finance and I have worked in the area of financial management at the head office of the Royal Bank of Canada, so I have a good understanding of budgeting and the importance of sound financial

management

I am also currently the volunteer treasurer of a highly successful community-run recreation facility in Ottawa, so I have experience with the fiscal realities of making do with less funding, selecting priorities, cutting marginal programs etc. I think this volunteer job also gives me some insight into how likely you are to find parents to participate in your school advisory councils, especially if you envisage these councils taking on a greater role than the current councils do. Parents in today's economy are pretty stretched and already participate a lot in the school system. I think that expecting them to take on a larger and larger role may be somewhat naïve.

As a result of these roles, I am very interested in what Bill 104 is intended to accomplish, as well as the process which has been engaged in to have this bill become law. I'm going to start by making some comments about the process, as I see it, as a member of the public, and I have made an effort to become quite familiar with the process

that has been engaged in.

I have major concerns about how Bill 104 has been designed and how the legislation is being moved forward. As I indicated, I have experience in the area of policy design and implementation for financial institutions at the federal level. While you probably think there are few similarities between education policy and financial institutions policy, I think this background gives me a good understanding of how fundamental changes to a policy framework can be developed in a thorough and logical manner.

Good process is essential to good policy and I think we need an open and defensible process which must include some key components. When we work on policies, we confirm our principles, goals and objectives before we start out. We consider a wide variety of options, evaluate the pros and cons of all the different alternatives. We seek public comment on proposals long before legislation is tabled and we revise and reconsider our original proposals to reflect the feedback we get from the public.

After all that has been gone through, then we table draft legislation and undergo public and committee hearings. I see no evidence that Bill 104 or any of the government's other proposals for education reform are based on a solid appreciation of what constitutes good education policy. Analyses had been conducted by the previous government, but this government chose to ignore most of the findings. Bill 104 appears to me to be a hastily contrived proposal which is consistent with a political platform rather than a set of underlying principles.

The development of Bill 104 also has not given affected parties an adequate opportunity to participate. This is essential in order to achieve a final result which is both practical and has a broad level of public support. Bill 104 has been marked by limited consultation. The time allotted for hearings is minimal and the legislation is being pushed forward at a virtually unprecedented speed. Most governments would accompany significant policy changes of this type with an appropriate transition period, but Bill 104 is supposed to be retroactive. In addition, significant aspects of the government's proposals are not even included in the legislation but will be specified through regulations.

As a case in point, the person who spoke before me was concerned about which boundaries or which school boards would be included in a new district school board. The bill gives the Lieutenant Governor in Council, or essentially cabinet, virtually unfettered discretion to establish these district school boards, but there is no appeal provision in the legislation whereby boards can negotiate how the district school boards will be established.

These aspects of the bill are of key concern to many constituents, but because they've been relegated to regulations there is even less opportunity for public comment. In summary, as a member of the public looking at this process, I find it entirely undemocratic.

I wold also like to comment on the substance of the bill. I started by reviewing the legislation and looking at what it was intended to accomplish. The preamble suggests that it is an act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system. These are very noble objectives, but there is no evidence in the legislation itself to suggest that any of these objectives will be accomplished or even furthered by the bill.

To start with, improving the accountability of the school system: A number of the proposals included in this bill will only serve to reduce the accountability of our existing system. The government is creating an appointed body, the Education Improvement Commission, and giving it very broad powers to oversee and approve decisions taken by elected school boards. All school board budgets must be approved by this commission and

boards may not deviate from those budgets without prior approval of the commission.

While not addressed in this bill, other policy statements issued by the government indicate that boards will also be losing all control over education funding. The existing school boards, which are accountable to the electorate, will lose their decision-making authority and an unelected commission, for which no clear accountability or appointment criteria have even been prescribed, will be given many of these powers.

Next, improving the effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system: Bill 104 only puts a framework in place whereby there may be fewer school boards with less authority and a new Education Improvement Commission with a vast range of powers but no specified skill set or clear mandate that their accomplishments can be measured against. How or why this new framework or commission will actually improve the effectiveness or quality of education is not clarified.

The commission, through its power to approve school boards' budgets, will have a significant influence on how boards allocate financial resources to different programs and services. But this in no way suggests that the effectiveness and quality of our education system will be improved. Quality improvements will be influenced much more by the funding available to deliver those services than by the existence of some commission to oversee the school boards.

I would hearken back to my earlier point that there are no prerequisites for membership to the commission specified, and the commission can delegate much of its authority to a committee which may be even less qualified and less accountable than the commission is itself.

Aspects of this bill suggest that the quality and effectiveness of education are likely to deteriorate, even if funding were maintained at current levels in all communities. For example, I think district school boards in most regions will be representing a much larger populace and therefore will have many more challenges ahead of them. The members of the district school boards will be more poorly remunerated and therefore will have less incentive to be dedicated and will have less time to commit to the task at hand. So the budgets which go to the commission for approval will be less well researched or vetted than under the current system. District school boards will represent much broader interests than the current school boards so they will be less able to design a tailored package of programs which serves those interests most appropriately. Finally, the Education Improvement Commission, with its broad, sweeping powers and requirements will add to the overhead costs without any value added.

The Chair: Ms Cameron, can I ask you to sum up

Ms Cameron: Yes, I will sum up. I could go on at length about my concerns about this bill and the government's plans for education reform more generally, but I think if the government truly wants an effective, high-quality education system, they should follow an open, democratic process in developing and implementing any proposals for change and they should leave the decision-making power closer to home, where those who will be

affected can really have a voice. Thank you for hearing my submission.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Cameron, for your presentation. We appreciate it.

## MITCHELL BEER

**The Chair:** Mitchell Beer. Thank you, Mr Beer, for being here with us. You have 10 minutes for your presentation.

**Mr Mitchell Beer:** Thank you very much for the opportunity. I realize that everybody here this morning is one of the chosen few.

I'm speaking today as an Ottawa Board of Education ratepayer and a member of the Coalition for Public Education. I have a son at Lisgar Collegiate, and a daughter who will enter junior kindergarten in September 1998, or senior kindergarten in September 1999, or grade 1 in September 2000, depending on which of those programs the OBE will be able to offer her by the time John Snobelen is finished cutting the heart and soul out of the province's public school system.

When I called the committees branch to book this time slot, I was asked to arrive with 30 copies —

Interjections.

Mr Beer: It would be nice if the members would allow the public to speak; we only have one day. I hope

that won't come off my time. Thank you.

When I called the committees branch to book this time slot, I was asked to arrive with 30 copies of my presentation. The committee clerk seemed a bit taken aback when I asked whether the copying costs would be tacked on to my tax cut. I should explain that I wasn't just being gratuitous, because if funding cuts and school board amalgamations tied up in Bill 104 lead to the elimination of junior kindergarten in the OBE, which seems all too likely, our household will pay an extra \$5,000 in child care costs beginning in September 1998. I wouldn't want to leave the impression that I see junior kindergarten as glorified babysitting, because it is so very, very much more, but our household is still saving up to cover our share of the cost of Mike Harris's taxpayers' revolution.

I should emphasize, and perhaps it's appropriate given the interruptions just now, that the venom in this presentation is directed away from the opposition members of the committee, unless you plan to support Bill 104, and away from any government members who plan to oppose the bill. To those government members, I would urge you to consider the example, the very good example, of the members of your own caucus who had the courage, integrity, and yes, the common sense to vote against the government on hospital restructuring. At least a half dozen of your colleagues recognized that they faced the prospect of imminent early retirement if they failed to reflect the needs and views of their constituents. Our group is committed to keeping John Snobelen's assault on education in the public eye until either Bill 104 or the government is defeated, and we are not alone.

In the true spirit of a back-to-basics curriculum, I'm going to take what's left of my 10 minutes to do a bit of history, a bit of math and a quick dose of civics. I realize I should be careful about setting precedents here, because

in John Snobelen's Ontario, 10 minutes of instruction will soon be enough to graduate from high school, or at least to drop out.

First, the history: It's a well-worn axiom that those who forget their history are doomed to repeat it, but when John Snobelen talks about looting \$31 million from the local rate base, when our own trustees muse about cutting another \$16 million from classroom programs, the discussion almost always takes place in a vacuum. There is rarely any acknowledgement that the Ottawa Board of Education is already hanging on by the proverbial fingernails, having cut \$75 million and 1,200 full-time staff positions over the past five years.

The more cynical among us would suggest that history is about how the victors combine fact and myth, and indeed I think there are a couple of myths going around that create a false platform for local school cutbacks. The first is the notion that Ottawa is an excessively wealthy community with a school board that wastes money with no regard for fiscal realities. The second is the implication that non-mandated school programs are all optional frills, just because the drafters of the provincial grant regulations failed to include them in the formula.

On the first point, I should emphasize it would be wrong for anyone in Ottawa or Toronto or Hamilton or London to deny the level of student need that exists in many of the province's small, rural school boards, but that doesn't mean the OBE is rolling in spare cash — far from it. Much of the OBE's vaunted commercial tax base consists of grants paid by the federal government in lieu of the taxes the board would normally collect on federal properties. The catch is that the OBE never sees the money. It is collected, banked and spent by the municipality, leaving the board to collect a corresponding amount in residential taxes and take the fall again for its supposedly free-spending ways, \$75 million in cuts later.

The other point we often forget is that for all the talk about diversifying our local economy, Ottawa still falls within the federal government's definition of a single-industry town, and our single industry is downsizing, reject-engineering and ultimately disappearing as we speak. The level of social and economic need in our community is skyrocketing by the minute and OBE students are living with the impacts, at home and at school. The Ottawa board may look like a rich jurisdiction on paper, but the statistics lie, or maybe they're just out of date. Unfortunately for us, provincial grant calculations tend to be based on the surface data, with little if any attention to the details, and it's the details where we live.

As for non-mandated programs, it never ceases to amaze me that a more or less neutral bureaucratic designation like "non-mandated programs" has become an epithet applied to any program that comes under attack by self-styled tax protesters, locally and more recently at Queen's Park. A short list of the OBE's non-mandated programs would include junior kindergarten, which is only the best early intervention tool available to us, not to mention school breakfast programs, English-as-a-second-language classes, adult programs, elementary mental health programs and so very much more. We know that a dollar spent on early education and interven-

tion saves \$4 to \$7 in future social costs. But two things are true about non-mandated programs: John Snobelen is highly unlikely to fund them and the high level of intense student need in our community won't go away if we just ignore it.

The OBE began its cutbacks in 1992, with a series of layoffs and program reductions that at the time added up to the deepest school program cut in Ontario history. The following year, the board assembled a 1,600-page program and service review that captured the impact of the cuts. The written text of this presentation includes a very brief overview of that material, because there isn't time in a 10-minute presentation to even briefly sum it up.

Which brings us to the audience participation component of today's presentation, and it takes the form of a snap math quiz at 5 minutes to 6. Are you ready? Let's go.

Question 1: Name the provincial education minister who wants to seize \$31 million from Ottawa ratepayers. He claims it's an equalization payment that will put more money into underfunded school boards, but he's made no commitment to keeping the money in education. Nor has he shown any interest in restoring the billions of dollars that successive governments have cut from provincial education grants.

Bonus question: Do you think he might want the money for the tax cut?

Question 2: A large, wealthy Canadian province decides to rewrite its funding model for education. They won't tell us anything about it, but at best the new model is expected to hold all per pupil spending to the current provincial average, so that the Ottawa board will have to take another \$55 million out of those scurrilous non-mandated programs we talked about. How many at-risk students are likely to survive the cut and become productive, responsible citizens in a democracy? How many will stay in the public system and how many will bail out to private schools? Based on your previous answers, will the resulting school system have one tier or two?

Question 3: Two school boards are forced to amalgamate. One of them has \$38 million in long-term debt, or it may be \$32.8 million, depending on which of the two boards you believe. The other one — that would be the Ottawa board — has debentures totalling \$6 million, because its trustees prefer to cut school programs rather than incur long-term debt for construction and renovation projects like everybody else. Compute the average of \$38 million and \$32.8 million, then average that figure with \$6 million. Based on your result, how should the debt be redistributed? If it's divided equally, should the board with the lower debt load be allowed to reinstate the programs it gave up to finance its renovations?

Our civics lesson for today takes the form of a wakeup call and a warning to any MPP who plans to support Bill 104. It comes under the heading of "No Mercy, No Surrender," and it's a message you're going to keep on hearing from parents and other ratepayers across this province until John Snobelen withdraws the bill and stops beating up on public education.

As you've been hearing all day, a complete and utter contempt for democracy is one of the central aspects of Bill 104, particularly its provision for a so-called Educa-

tion Improvement Commission — that's one that must have George Orwell spinning in his grave — that transfers much of the authority of local school boards to a small band of political appointees. Destruction of local democracy is also a common denominator that the education reforms share with hospital closures, the megacity plan and a host of other provincial initiatives.

Citizens across Ontario, and in your own ridings, are rallying to protect democratic institutions that have been built up over the past 50 years or more. This morning. the coalition was proud to join with the Ontario Education Alliance, People for Education, and Citizens for Local Democracy to announce a province-wide "Kill the Bill" campaign in response to 104. Out here at the grass roots, we're seeing the first signs of a wave of public outrage over education cuts that will sweep away the government's outrageous, undemocratic, child-hating demands. That wave is coming, and we're prepared to sustain it for the next three years if that's what it takes to turn back the effects of Bill 104 and begin rebuilding our public school system. The minister says the time for discussion is over; we say the time for conversation and activism and community outrage and community building has just begun. The choice for each of you is simple: Get out in front of the wave or wait for it to consume you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation. You have used all of your time. We thank you for being here.

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## LANARK COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Chair: Could I call upon the Lanark County Board of Education, June Timmons.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): Madam Chair, I have another point of order.

The Chair: All right, as Ms Timmons settles down. Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): I'd just like to present the copies of a brief I received prepared by Caroll Carkner, president of the Prescott-Russell Women Teachers' Association. I believe the opposition have received a copy already.

The Chair: If you deposit it with the clerk, we'll ensure that it's distributed.

Welcome, Ms Timmons, and I'd ask you to present your co-presenters. You obviously have some audiovisual effects for us which you'll tell us about.

Mrs June Timmons: Good evening. My name is June Timmons. I am chair of the Lanark County Board of Education and I would like to introduce some of the people I have with me here today. Barbara-Jane Zielinski is superintendent of schools; Jack Johnson is superintendent of schools; Glen Blanchard is a trustee and past chair; and Ed Klymko is our superintendent of business. We also have a couple of trustees in the audience.

On behalf of the Lanark County Board of Education, I want to thank you for the opportunity to share some of our thoughts and recommendations as they relate to the proposed Bill 104. In the interests of time, my oral presentation will vary somewhat from the written document which has been circulated.

Our most pressing concern about Bill 104 itself is the general vagueness of how this legislation will affect

school boards. Throughout the legislation we see statements such as, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations providing for...." We also read that the Education Improvement Commission "shall oversee the transition of the new system of education governance in Ontario." Both of these phrases are followed by a long list of issues which must be addressed but for which no specifics are provided.

For the last number of years, the Ministry of Education and Training has been promoting the issue of accountability of school boards. We must ask: Where is the accountability of the ministry or this government to the electors of this province if the aspects of this bill that truly matter to the students and parents will not be discussed in the Legislature? Where is the accountability if the details that really matter will be established by the Lieutenant Governor in Council or by an appointed commission which is not politically accountable to anyone and whose decisions are "final and shall not be reviewed or questioned by a court?"

I'd like to turn to finance now and we do have an overhead which we will show during this part of the presentation.

We are aware that in January 1997, Ernst and Young International concluded that approximately \$149 million "appears to be a reasonable estimate of savings that can be achieved if the proposed changes to school board governance are made and carefully managed." We believe that much of these savings do not apply to the Lanark County Board of Education or the Leeds and Grenville County Board of Education. As you can see from the overhead, both the Lanark and the Leeds and Grenville county boards currently spend less than the provincial median on overall costs per student. Even though the overall expenditures are below the provincial median, the boards managed to spend higher than the provincial median on direct classroom expenses. It follows then that the boards also spend below the provincial median on classroom support and administration. We fail to see how the government would expect that the proposed amalgamation would result in any financial savings.

Much of the reason for this lower expenditure comes from the fact that these boards have already implemented the reductions or have never had the expenditures which form the basis for the estimates of cost savings in the Ernst and Young report. Several examples of cost savings are included in the written text of our presentation.

Now we would like to turn to the issue of transition costs. What will be the costs of creating 50 or 60 new district school boards? As mentioned in the Sweeney report, there will be significant transition costs associated with amalgamation. These costs include, but are not limited to, a new communication structure, a new payroll structure, new banking arrangements, new finance arrangements and new human resources systems. An actual example of the potential magnitude of costs is available in the recent restructuring of the Ottawa-Carleton police forces, where the costs were much higher than anything that has been mentioned by the ministry or its staff.

The Ottawa-Carleton police force was formed in January 1995 to join the former Nepean, Ottawa and

Gloucester police forces. They had a total budget of approximately \$99 million in 1996 and a staff of 1,238. According to the data in the Ottawa-Carleton Police Amalgamation Report dated November 25, 1996: "The amalgamation process required a one-time capital investment to create the technological infrastructure needed to support a region-wide service. The provincial government financed the majority of these costs by contributing a grant of \$18 million." Can we expect similar transition funding?

Included in our written presentation is a section concerning school councils. I draw your attention specifically to a letter from the co-chair of one of the school councils which indicates that many of the school councils in our area at least believe that the proposed structure, which includes Lanark, is "unwieldy" and "would make no sense on any terms."

Now we would like to turn to the issue of equity. There is some disadvantage to being scheduled near the end of the day and I know you have heard some of these statistics earlier in the day; however, they are very important and I think they bear repeating.

A quick look at the map of Ontario will show that the new structure which includes Lanark will encompass a geographical area which takes in all of the southeastern tip of Ontario except for Ottawa-Carleton. The size of the new area will make it impossible for the anticipated one, two or three trustees to truly represent the electors of Lanark county.

The new area encompasses approximately 11,759 square kilometres. A large administrative structure will be necessary to address the needs of 37,799 students in 90 elementary and 23 secondary schools in several very distant and distinct communities. The distance from one end of the new board to the other will be approximately 250 kilometres by the most direct route. The round-trip distance to all of the current board offices in Perth, Brockville, Cornwall and Hawkesbury is approximately 450 kilometres, even if you drive across the Ottawa-Carleton district board to minimize the distance. This is 50 kilometres more than a round trip from the Huron county board office in Clinton to the centre of Toronto.

To demonstrate the size and distances, we are going to superimpose the boundaries of our proposed new board on to southwestern Ontario. To put this in another perspective, in a comparable distance you could visit the offices in the boards of Halton, Hamilton, Wentworth, Brant, Oxford, London, Middlesex, Huron, Perth, Waterloo, Wellington, Peel and Toronto. These offices will be part of nine new district boards, versus the one district board in eastern Ontario. The return travel time to several of the schools within our new district board would be well over two hours from any central location. The proposed new area is larger than any of the proposed new district boards in southern Ontario.

Other new district board configurations are much smaller in area and include fewer students than the proposed four-board configuration which includes Lanark. Huron-Perth will have 20,768 students in an area of 5,593 square kilometres and Bruce-Grey will have 24,595 students in an area of 8,553 square kilometres. The two separate boards in these jurisdictions will have about 4,500 students each.

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Amalgamation of Lanark and Leeds and Grenville would create a board of 22,700 students in an area of 6,454 square kilometres. Similarly, Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry amalgamated with Prescott and Russell would have 15,099 students in an area of 5,305 square kilometres. Both of these organizations would result in more equitable representation for the parents and students in the four boards.

To maintain the proposed number of boards at 66, there has been some suggestion that the Lanark and Renfrew boards amalgamate. Such an amalgamation would result in similar inequities, as the size and distances would be comparable.

Now I'd like to turn to some staff concerns. The geographic areas of many of the proposed new boards in southern Ontario are such that the staff working in one board office can, if necessary, commute quite readily to a new district board office when its location is finally decided. Given the geographic magnitude of the proposed area of which Lanark will be a part, this will not likely be the case. If a new board office is established in the centre of the new district board, what is the government going to do for the staff in the current offices who may not be able to move to the new location, and why should the staff in the four current boards be faced with such a concern when their counterparts in other boards are not? The government must also consider what impact the removal of some or all of the central office payroll of \$1.3 million will have on a small community such as Lanark county.

We have several questions in our written presentation. I will read two:

Why does the government believe that the students and electors in Lanark deserve less representation per student over a much greater area and longer distances than the students and electors in southern Ontario?

Is the government prepared to review its proposal to amalgamate the four public boards in eastern Ontario and treat the residents of these boards equitably with others in southern Ontario?

The Sweeney task force published the criteria it used to make its recommendations on new school board structures. These criteria included size of student population, reasonable distance, existing traffic patterns, similar interests and natural affinities, and joint ventures with social services. Based on these criteria, the task force recommended that Lanark, Leeds and Grenville become one board of education. What compelling reasons did the ministry have to vary from the Sweeney recommendations in a major way in four areas in southern Ontario? Does the ministry have criteria to support its proposal? If the answer is yes, why won't the ministry publish its criteria and supporting data for its current proposal so that it can be publicly debated?

We have a proposal. For the reasons noted above and others which we would be happy to discuss with you, it is our proposal that you concur with the recommendations of the Sweeney report and amalgamate the Lanark and Leeds and Grenville county boards of education and create a separate entity for the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, and Prescott and Russell public boards. We

appreciate that this recommendation would create one more public district board within the province, but it would be a small price to pay to meet the needs of parents and students in eastern Ontario. It would also treat these parents and students equitably without adding any cost to the non-classroom component of education, which is already lower than the provincial median. There is no magic to the number 66.

The Lanark County Board of Education wants to make it very clear that it has the deepest respect for the boards in Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, and Prescott and Russell, but it believes that in a smaller entity it can both provide a more efficient educational program and meet the needs of students most effectively.

Thank you for the opportunity of appearing before you. The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Timmons, to you and your colleagues, for coming here and putting on such a vivid presentation. With the late hour, the audiovisual presentation is much appreciated. Thank you.

## CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES, ONTARIO EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE COORDINATING COMMITTEE, LOCAL 2357

The Chair: Could I call upon CUPE, Ontario Educational Institute Coordinating Committee, Local 2357, Wendy Schieman. Welcome, Mrs Schieman. Thank you very much for being with us this evening.

Mrs Wendy Schieman: This is the vice-president of CUPE Local 2357, Carman Johnston. We are with the Ottawa separate school board.

There are 47,000 unionized school support staff in Ontario. We work in all occupations in the education sector. CUPE members are education assistants, clerical workers, audio-visual technicians, ESL and adult education instructors, accounting personnel, computer programmers and technicians, purchasing officers, librarians, printers, mail clerks, receptionists, school bus drivers, counsellors, speech pathologists, maintenance workers, tradespeople and custodians, each and every one a caregiver. All of these occupations are an important part of the quality of education delivered in the classroom. Yet, contrary to the Minister of Education's declaration, school support workers tend to receive a very modest rate of pay for the important work they do. Many of our workers work and are paid 10 months a year.

The school secretary is the first person one sees on entering a school. They are the link between the school and the rest of the world. He or she works with the children, parents, school staff, board staff, health personnel, social agencies, media and outside companies. They are the school's communications centre. When a child is ill or sad or scared or lonely, the school secretary administers first aid, medication, hugs, dry pants, warm mittens, a friendly smile or a special treat. Most secretaries I've known have always known the right thing to say to the right child at the right time. When a child misses the bus, is absent, is late, it is the secretary who mans the phone and solves the problem. In between, of course, are the report cards, the typing of reports, letters, lists, purchase orders and exams. The average salary across Ontario is \$14 to \$16 an hour, or \$20,000 to \$22,000 a year.

The board workers cover a broad spectrum. They are the people who keep the schools supplied, the bills paid, the staff paid, the computers humming, the public informed and the school board on track. Their education level varies, their skills vary and their salaries vary. However, dollar for dollar, they are paid a comparable salary to their equals in the private sector. Not one of them is privy to an inflated salary for the job done. The majority of school personnel are paid below \$30,000.

The education assistant is not a teacher, is not paid a teacher's salary, is in the classroom, is deemed essential to the classroom by the teacher they work with, the students they tend and the parents of those students. Without any consultation with these people, the Ministry of Education labelled the EA not classroom-essential. The EA offers specialized skills in programming and training on specialized computer programs, sign language, Braille, PIC symbols, language, speech, physics and occupational therapy. EAs may feed children, catheterize them, clean and change breathing tubes, administer medication, dress children, assist with transportation, yard supervision, classroom and physical education. Quite a bargain at an average of \$22,000 a year.

The school custodian is the first person in the school in the morning and the last one out at the end of the day. They keep the school clean and safe. They change fluorescent lights and ballasts, check the water supply and fix flush valves. They fix broken desks and equipment to save the school money. They paint and/or wash furniture, clean walls, wax and wash floors, clean carpets and windows. They shovel sidewalks and playground areas to make them safe for everyone. They meet the needs of community groups. They know who is in the school at night. They know and look after the students, whether it is the lost mitten of a grade 1 student, or a lost locker key of a grade 12 student. The average salary is between \$23,000 and \$24,000 a year.

In July 1995, John Snobelen publicly stated his intention to "invent a crisis" in Ontario's education system, a crisis that would justify the kind of radical reforms this government wanted to make. Not surprisingly, our schools have come under a constant barrage of criticism ever since, the charges ranging from education spending is out of control to too much money is being spent outside the classroom, our students are graduating without a good education, teachers are overpaid and have too much control over education.

Bill 104 is nothing more than the predictable outcome of this propaganda campaign. If Bill 104 is passed, the government will begin to exert a new control over Ontario's education system, starting with the establishment of the undemocratic Education Improvement Commission.

Bill 104 is the government's first big step down the road of privatizing Ontario's schools. First, non-instructional services will be outsourced. Next, no doubt, will come the handing over of the construction and maintenance of schools to the private sector, then charter schools and, finally, privatization of curriculum and even teaching, as exists south of the border. Education will no longer be in the hands of education experts. It will cater to the private agenda of a select few. Public education

will not serve the masses equally; there will be the haves and the have-nots. CUPE does not believe our public system is broken.

This presentation will focus on the issues in Bill 104 that most directly touch the lives of the 35,000 CUPE members who work in Ontario's education system. This is not to say that CUPE is not deeply concerned about the process being put in place for mergers and amalgamations, the government's intention to control and reform curriculum, or the government's attack on the province's teachers. As time does not permit me to give a presentation on all the issues we would like to address, we urge the government to take into account the concerns of the teachers' unions and groups like the Ontario Education Alliance.

1830

Bill 104 is an attack on jobs in every community across the province. The Education Improvement Commission will be mandated to recommend to the government how to, not whether or not to, outsource all non-instructional services in the system. It would appear that the privatization of tens of thousands of decent jobs is based on the government's constant contention that too much money is being spent outside the classroom on services like caretaking, maintenance and school administrative services.

It sounds like this government would like to return to the time of the one-room schoolhouse, when students walked all those miles through minus-40 weather to get to school. The teacher swept the classroom and lit the wood stove in the winter, and nice neighbours would shovel the snow, repair the roof and do any painting that was necessary. Students would never be bothered by intrusive school psychologists, speech therapists, guidance counsellors or special education assistants. Of course, there were no phones and no photocopiers, so there was no need for school secretaries. Yes, the good old days. The system was run very cheaply.

Are the many services available in today's system worth the extra cost? Of course they are. Our children are worth it. We have a world-class education system, as was attested to when the Durham Board of Education and Sinclair Secondary School were awarded the prestigious Bertelsmann prize for excellence in education last fall. These are not the only world-class boards or schools in the province. Our system is world-class because it is public and it has developed good processes of governance and accountability.

If the government is not suggesting that we can do without these important services in our schools, then what they must be saying is that employees should do these jobs for lower wages and deteriorating working conditions. That is an unacceptable jobs strategy by anyone's standards. The average CUPE school board worker supports a family on less than \$24,000 per year. CUPE members believe our education system and their jobs are worth defending.

What about the quality of non-instructional services? Does it matter if private companies clean the school, maintain and repair the plumbing and the furnace, handle student reports and staff the school and board offices? In CUPE's experience, it very much does.

Ontario's students deserve the best possible environment in which to learn. In fact, studies have shown that students do better in clean and comfortable learning environments. They also deserve reliable, well-trained and well-treated staff in their schools. They have a right to be educated in a stable environment where staff are familiar and happy and create a welcoming atmosphere for children to learn in. CUPE staff across this province have watched our children grow up. They've dried their tears, wiped their noses and retrieved lost balls from rooftops.

CUPE's experience with privatization in the education, health care and municipal sectors shows that service invariably suffers. Buildings are not as clean. Lower-paid and insecure staff have a higher turnover. Sometimes contractors go out of business, leaving the public to pick up the tab. Ironically, it can often cost more, not less, to contract out public services. Time and again, we have seen that privatization is done only for ideological reasons, not because it provides better service and not because it costs less.

When the Harris government attacks jobs, it attacks communities too. Yes, there will be private sector jobs in the schools if the private companies take over non-instructional services, but the need to make a profit will dictate that there will be fewer jobs provided, they will pay less and they will not provide the benefits and fair working conditions that inspire loyalty and consistency in staff.

Taking money out of the pockets of workers takes money out of local economies around the province. Consumer confidence is already low. If Bill 104 is passed, landlords will find usually reliable tenants suddenly not able to pay their rent, banks will have former school board employees defaulting on mortgages and local retailers will see business fall. Such an economic strategy is simply unacceptable.

Privatization will not only take money out of Ontario's local economies. Currently, large American-based companies are best positioned to profit from the sudden and massive privatization of non-instructional services in Ontario's schools. Contracts with these companies will siphon taxpayers' money out of the local economy, the region and even the country. Will the board of trade really appreciate the cuts to education when workers' spending dollars are greatly curtailed?

CUPE is very concerned about the establishment of the Education Improvement Commission. It seems the government is unwilling to take full responsibility for the changes it is about to unleash on our schools. Instead, an unelected and unaccountable body will take over what should be the responsibility of elected politicians at both the provincial and local levels.

Will Bill 104 improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system as it promises? No, nor is that the government's obvious intent. Bill 104 is designed to start privatizing large portions of the education system while giving the provincial government the control it needs to continue on that path, whether through charter school legislation, sale of schools to the private sector etc.

CUPE members will not stand by while their jobs are eliminated. They will fight to maintain the high-quality

services they provide and to defend the wellbeing of the communities they live in. You need to reaffirm the need for the public delivery of education, acknowledging that a public system is more efficient and equitable. Defeat Bill 104 and engage in true consultation with stakeholders. If meaningful consultation with stakeholders still results in school board amalgamation, establish a process that protects jobs. Put fair workforce adjustment programs in place and protect the public delivery of all aspects of the system. Return accountability to the hands of elected representatives — MPPs and trustees — not the unelected and unaccountable Education Improvement Commission and education improvement committees. Ensure that elected boards of education are stronger, not weaker, and more accountable, not less accountable. Invest more, not less, in our public education system.

Education of the people of this province is of the utmost importance to all the people of Ontario. All the people of Ontario must be given a say in the deliverance of said education. If privatization of education and its workers is allowed to continue, the people of Ontario will be the losers, morally, financially and pedagogically. Can we really afford Bill 104?

Mrs McLeod: I think you've identified a major concern with outsourcing. If you're going to save money through it, it means either less service or lower salaries or some combination of both. You've also touched on what it would do to the school community and the essential role of support staff in the school community.

One of the other alternatives that appears to be under consideration right now is that rather than looking at school boards outsourcing, they would actually turn the costs of school construction, janitorial services, secretarial services and busing over to the municipalities in return for taking back some of the social service offload. Can you tell me what you think that option would do to the school community and the services?

Mrs Schieman: I still feel it's going to be a question of privatization, where whoever privatizes it, whether it be municipal government or the school boards themselves, you're still going to have the same loss. Speaking very personally, your best employee is a happy employee. A happy employee is someone who is considered, is taken care of.

Mr Wildman: I couldn't agree more with your last statement and also the question of safety in the schools. I noted when you were doing it, I think because of the time, you did not read the last paragraph on page 4, which I think is really significant because it does point out that thanks to the federal government, both the Mulroney government and the Chrétien government, if these services are privatized, it will not be able to bring them back into the public sector at some future date because of the provisions of the free trade agreement.

Mrs Schieman: You're right. I left it out because of the time. I was afraid I'd run out of time, and it is definitely a factor.

**Mr O'Toole:** I appreciate your presentation. I am sympathetic to the points you make. Just a couple of questions. The first one is a clarification, if I may, through the Chair. It says in the first paragraph that CUPE represents ESL, adult education, librarians — I

thought the librarians were covered by the teachers' union.

Mrs Schieman: In some schools, sir, we have librarians—

Mr O'Toole: There's a variance. Which, in your opinion, would do the best job, the members of CUPE or the members of OSSTF — pardon me, one of the other organizations?

Mrs Schieman: Can we speak privately?

Mr O'Toole: No.

Mrs Schieman: I think that's an unfair question, sir. I definitely —

Mr O'Toole: You don't know?

Mrs Schieman: I didn't say I didn't know, I said it was an unfair question. I don't know if I'm willing in a public forum.

Mr O'Toole: That's my question. I don't know if I'm getting an answer. Is that a yes or a no?

The Acting Chair: Thanks very much for your presentation this evening.

1840

## CHRIS BOWES

The Acting Chair: I call forward Chris Bowes, please. Welcome, Mr Bowes.

Mr Chris Bowes: I'm glad to have this opportunity to speak in favour of Bill 104. I'm 33 years old and a lifetime resident of the city of Ottawa. I'm a product of the wonderful education system that is being defended by many people quite eloquently, but I'd like to say that an earlier speaker, Joe Griffiths — I think his situation vis-àvis his experiences with the education system in this province is more indicative of reality.

When I was in high school — this is in 1980 — my vice-principal, because I had a part-time job, told me that I should drop out, that I should not be in school. This man is still in the system and he is still probably advising students.

The criteria for some of the defence that has been put forward of the present system are very interesting, I must say. Originally, I wasn't going to speak on this when they announced public hearings, but as I talked to more and more of my friends, people my age who have children and I have a nephew and a niece and I'm seeing their education. It's terrible. They can't spell. There's only so much parents can do, especially when they're very busy. My friends and people my age, many of us are accused — I'm at the tail end of the baby boom, sort of on the dividing line; some would call us generation X - of being cynical, of not being concerned. When I started hearing some of the reactions that have been going on around the province on this, I thought it's time I spoke up. It's time that I came out and said something, because this situation can't go on.

This bill at least addresses a lot of the concerns that have been raised in 24 various studies.

When I was entering high school, I can recall — and if the clerk is following my outline, I'm deviating a bit, because when I heard Joseph speak, it reminded me of a lot of things. One of the ones I find amazing is, when I entered high school in about 1978-79, the Ontario system

was at the bottom of any standard you want around the western industrialized world. As I started researching some of this and looking at the status of the systems — and I'm a lifetime resident; this is a long time — there are six boards of education in Ottawa-Carleton now. We have Ted Best, who is quoted in articles in this area. He's the chairman of the OBE, which I'm a product of. I might add, I ended up dropping out and I never bothered going back because of many of the same reasons as were outlined by earlier speaker Joseph Griffiths, and he's 23. So there's 10 years' difference in experience.

We have 1,600 empty desks. We have a school board which has underutilized schools. As far back as I can remember, you have two boards or several boards — some of the people who are sitting around here like Mr Patten probably can recall these things from the news items — where school boards couldn't agree on dividing up empty schools. A good example is that we keep hearing about how this is all being done to facilitate a tax cut. How can you justify defending a system that increased spending by 82% over 10 years, increased taxes by 120%, while enrolment across the province increased by 19%? My background is economics. I went to Carleton University. Thank God I managed to work my way back into the education system at a much better level, I think.

We hear a lot about ESL, so I'd like to get to ESL and adult education. I personally think if the system was working properly for many people, you would not need an adult education system at the high school level. We hear that these cuts are being made for that. The standard must be, I believe, where we rank in education terms. I went to Carleton University when I turned 26. I used to make my money in extracurricular activities, marking papers, helping people write papers who supposedly graduated grade 13 English, OAC's equivalent now, who couldn't write a sentence with verbs in it. They couldn't structure an argument. It was unbelievable. Is this the system that is being defended by those who are opposing 104?

When we look at the ranking, I'll say it was in the Common Sense Revolution where they talked about — the graph illustrates it pretty nicely — our ranking in the OAC when it comes to education.

Mr Wildman: A most unbiased document. Mr Bowes: A most unbiased document, yes,

Twenty-four studies have addressed many of these issues. We've heard some of them mentioned: the Sweeney report. We've had two decades where school boards have had the opportunity to do something with the system. When I was in the school system in 1980 versus now, when you look at the standard, we are still no better off, yet we've increased spending. We throw money at a problem instead of allocating resources. To use an economics catch-phrase, being somebody of an economics background, it's allocation of resources.

I'll give you an example. A tale of two schools is what I call it. Ottawa's Roberta Bondar school came in at \$12 million for 700 students, while across the street in what will now be the new boundaries of Ottawa South, across in the city of Gloucester, in the Carleton Board of Education, you had a similar school for a similar number

of students, Sawmill Creek, that came in at \$5.5 million. Meanwhile, the same OBE can't find \$3 million to upgrade or renovate Laurentian High School. To trust the school boards to act on some of these issues of education — and we've heard some arguments about privatization and things like that. An example is a byline out of the Ottawa Citizen, "Where Have All the Trustees Gone?" These people can't even get a quorum to decide on how they're going to allocate their resources, yet they complain that they're being cut off. It's unreal.

I talk to my friends who all have children who are just about to go into the school system. The one thing they said to me when I was coming before this committee was to say, "Please, do not allow them to keep a system that will give my children the kind of education experience I

had."

The Acting Chair: Mr Bowes, you have one minute. Mr Bowes: I had a lot to speak to, and I wish I could speak to some more of it. As I say, the bill I think is a step in the right direction. It does have some flaws, some might say, but that's what this committee is here to address. I have a lot of faith in the Legislature that it can fix the system, and it should be fixed. It's not working. I'll cut my comments now in case there's a question.

The Acting Chair: Actually, you have about 15 seconds, so maybe you want to say a last remark.

Mr Bowes: I just want to say also on the tax cut issue and the transfer of taxes — a very important issue for people my age, young families, and this extends to lower-income — that by doing something about the property tax burden, it will give an opportunity to people my age to own a home. I think that is something that has not been addressed by many of the people who are opposed to this bill.

The Acting Chair: You're paying the same amount of money. Anyway, thank you very much, Mr Bowes. We appreciate your presentation.

1850

## HOPEWELL SCHOOL COUNCIL

The Acting Chair: Could I call Colleen Leighton to come forward, please, from the Hopewell School Council. Ms Leighton, welcome.

Ms Colleen Leighton: Thank you very much. My name is Colleen Leighton and I'm chairperson of the Hopewell public school council in the Ottawa Board of Education.

My message is simple: We all need quality education. We need it to foster an educated workforce able to meet the quickly changing demands of today's business environment. We need quality education to demonstrate to investors that we have the infrastructure in place to ensure their continued success because, as we know, our human assets are the only competitive edge we have in the global marketplace. The community needs quality education to ensure all of our young people play a productive role in our society. Children need quality education to develop their full potential to grow into healthy adults who strive to continue their learning throughout their lives. We all must do everything we can to preserve a quality education system.

Today I am speaking as a parent, just one parent representing one school council at one elementary school of over 600 children in one city in Ontario, but we are the most critical partners in education. This government, as well as the previous one, recognized our critical role by formalizing school councils in the education system. The Royal Commission on Learning found that the greatest predictor of a student's success was the interest of the parent in that child's education.

What does Bill 104 mean to me as a parent? It means amalgamating school boards has been identified as the greatest priority in improving the quality of education, taking a different direction from previous studies that spent time and money to state that amalgamating school boards does not have a measurable impact on improving

the quality of education.

Does it mean we're using energy, time and money that could be used towards the real objective: ensuring a quality education system? Overall, Bill 104 seems to me like an attempt to fix something, but what is it going to fix? In many ways, the lack of clarity over what this bill will accomplish is not surprising, because the education reform agenda has become very crowded. With proposals for education funding and collective bargaining changes, along with secondary and elementary school curriculum revisions, parents are finding it difficult to know where the education system is going. Do you know?

Just what is the problem with education today? Overall, we do a good job. No one would say we're failing at educating our children. When we talk about improving the quality of education, we're in the envious position of talking about improving our position of being one of the

best in the world.

Perhaps our students are not achieving what one would expect for the money we spend. I'm certain that the reasons for that are many and complex, ranging from the incentives in the system for teachers to have a vested interest in the success of their students to the supports available to those teachers to make the most productive use of their classroom time. The support required for a successful classroom experience is not that complicated and we don't need any more studies to figure it out. Any parent could tell you. The supports include an effective curriculum, support for children whose needs are unique, reasonable class sizes, an effective facility and good basic supplies.

With these supports, the teacher can concentrate on the learning of the students and they will be successful. These supports will ensure the success of all students, even those who for various reasons and through no fault of their own don't have resources available to them on

the home front.

Do we have all these elements in place in Ontario schools? I don't think so. We have too many situations here in the Ottawa Board of Education where those elements are not present: situations where teachers are too distracted by the needs of a large number of students to accomplish the daily lesson; where the support for students with special needs will not be available for another 12 months so the teacher, the student and their peers are distracted by the frustration that develops in the class; where old facilities preoccupy everyone with being

too cold or too hot, and teachers wonder whether they could successfully evacuate the students from a building that does not meet fire regulations; and where students come home without the books to do their homework because there aren't enough to go around.

We have heard many times in the past several months that Ottawa is a rich board. If these are the problems in a rich board, heaven help those with fewer resources.

What is the solution? Certainly not taking money out of the system. I think parents would agree that focusing funding and attention on the classroom and the resources available to that classroom are critical.

Will Bill 104 increase classroom resources? We don't know. If costs are reduced as a result of Bill 104, will those funds be put back into supports for the classroom? We don't know. Will the definition of funding for the classroom include all these elements? We don't know. Do you know?

Where does Bill 104 fit in all these education priorities? Where does the role of parents as critical partners fit? Most of all, where do the concerns for the children fit in all these proposals?

Change for the sake of change is never a good idea. Many of us work in organizations that have gone through extensive restructuring over the last few years, driven by economic realities. We know how wrenching these changes have been and the cost this has brought on an individual and an organization-wide basis that is paid for by both for years to come.

Change in education can be even more costly because the children only have one shot at it. If the change we bring disrupts even one school year for a child, they may never make it up. Let's make sure we know why we are changing education, that we know the impact that change will have and that we can ensure the change is a positive one on all those classroom supports I talked about earlier: an effective curriculum, support for children with unique needs, reasonable class sizes, an effective facility and good basic supplies.

We won't improve the quality of education by creating confusion, alienation and fear among the people we need most to make education a success: the parents, the teachers and the children. We need to ensure that any changes are focused on putting resources into the supports for a successful classroom and that we reinvest any available funding for this purpose.

Parents will do their part if they can. We can't do it alone. We can't do it all through school councils. We need the financial and infrastructure resources that support the classroom to help us. We need to know that we all share the same objective: to improve the quality of education in the province. Please don't make changes for changes' sake. Demonstrate leadership to make Ontario education the best in the world. It is the best investment in our future and in our future success that any government could make. Give it the time and energy required of the most important investment you will ever make. And be careful: This is one investment where you can't afford to take risks. The stakes are too high.

My final message: Understand what the problem is, what the best solution is and take careful steps to build that solution, and don't forget the critical role of parents

in building that solution. Does Bill 104 have a role in the solution to quality education? Parents don't know. Do you know?

Mr Skarica: We heard earlier today from one of the local boards, the CECLF. They took a 7% reduction in 1996, yet were able to eliminate debt, not increase taxes, save their kindergarten program, increase the number of teachers in the classroom, put additional funds into computers for their schools and so on and so forth. The way they did that was, as they say, they reduced administrative and operating expenses and they restructured delivery of services, including some outsourcing and contracting out of maintenance and custodial services.

Ms Leighton: I think the main response to that is that if we can improve the resources in the classroom, improve those elements that I suggested, there's nothing wrong with that. I think every organization always has to look at better ways of delivering its services, but I think we have to keep in mind what those elements are and make sure we understand what decisions we're making.

Mr Patten: Thank you very much for your presentation. I appreciate your style and your inquisitive approach. Let me address page 3, where you say: "What are the solutions? Will Bill 104 increase classroom resources? We don't know. If costs are reduced, will those funds be put back into the classroom? Will the definition of funding for the classroom include all these elements? We don't know."

I think we do know. I think we know that the money is not being put back into the system. I think the minister has been clear about it. He says he's looking. As a matter of fact, I have an article right here that says Bill 104 will allow him the vehicle to find the extra \$1 billion or so that he's looking for. So the answer, I would say, unhappily, because I know the school of which you speak — I used to have a son who went there and I know it still needs some repair — and I know the concern around education, but the money will not be put back into education. I think the basis of the whole issue for a lot of the opposition members is they know this money is all leaving education totally. I don't know whether you would agree with that or not.

Interjections.

Mr Patten: It is so.

Ms Leighton: I would hope that perhaps the government, in reviewing the situation and what our objectives are in education and what the classroom impacts would be, isn't necessarily going to make that decision. I don't know that it's all that firm, but I think part of this process is to do the thinking that's required to make sure we are going to have the right solution here. If we can get some assurances that these are the supports that are going to be available, it can be successful, even with some modification.

Mr Wildman: Hope springs eternal at Hopewell.

The Chair: A brief question, Mr Wildman?

Mr Wildman: Actually, I have a bit of déjà vu here. I went to Hopewell school in junior kindergarten — Interjections.

The Chair: Gentlemen, please, don't encourage him. Mr Wildman: — before I moved into Carleton county, so it is an old school. I'm wondering if your

concern with regard to where you say you don't know and you want to know the answers — obviously the list you have on page 4 are the basics, as well as a good, motivated staff, so the question really is, will this bill do that? Our concern is that it's going to concentrate decisions around curriculum and funding and expenditures at Queen's Park and that it won't do that. I guess that's the crucial question. Unfortunately, if the proof is in the pudding and we're right and the government is not, the children will suffer.

Ms Leighton: Yes, and I hope that in this process the voice of parents will be heard, because they are critical in this. I think these are the solutions, and hopefully we can get those solutions and it won't be quite as drastic as

some of the people are predicting.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Leighton. Thank you for coming in such inclement weather.

## LINDA DANSKY

The Chair: Could I ask Ms Linda Dansky to come forward. Ms Dansky, thank you for coming.

Mrs Linda Dansky: Do I hand this in?

The Chair: Yes. You can give it to the clerk. You can just be seated. You've been here for the better part of the

day. You're a trooper.

Mrs Dansky: Good evening. I am the mother of four young children. I am also a member of the Coalition for Public Education. I am here because my children are at the centre of my life. As a Canadian and as a citizen of Ontario, I value an adequately funded public education system that puts the children at the centre of its design. I want a system that is accessible to all children, irrespective of their backgrounds. I need a system that is democratic as well as fair. I am pleading for a system that is responsive to the child, to the parents, as well as the local community.

Bill 104 devalues my children. It has neither my children nor the two million other children in this province at the centre of its purpose. The purpose of Bill 104 is to centralize authority at Queen's Park and to discredit local authority. Behind this purpose is an attempt to decrease democratic opposition to the government's plan to remove much-needed funds from the education system at the expense of my children, their future and our society. You will have more people like Joseph Griffiths and Chris Bowes who will fall through the cracks, not less.

Taking away the right of school boards to raise any other funding locally means the province will have complete control over education spending, which will make it easier for Queen's Park to cut even more from public education. Gone will be the crucial link between democratically elected trustees and the community they serve. Instead, full government control over spending will give omnipotent power to nameless bureaucrats at Queen's Park who have no community interest in our children and are as remote, inaccessible and unresponsive as people in large bureaucracies tend to become.

The amalgamation of boards will not eliminate inefficiency; it will only perpetuate it at higher levels of centralization. As human beings are inefficient, it is better to have these imperfections closer at hand than hidden

away in some faraway, bureaucratic place. The effect of such large geographic boards is to make local authority ineffective. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education found that boards having more than 40,000 students lose contact with the local community. Local needs will not be addressed by such boards. But this seems to fit with the government's ultimate purpose: to centralize authority.

The government claims that amalgamation will save only \$150 million. Other studies have estimated, as we've heard today, that it will not save in the long run, as initial startup costs will not be recovered. And what about the extra cost of managing geographically huge boards? What about the time and expense diverted from what is really important, the learning of our children? On the whole, the Royal Commission on Learning recommended that boards be encouraged to cooperate and share expenses rather than amalgamate. The Ottawa Board of Education already has consortia with other boards in the area for this purpose. David Crombie, in the Who Does What panel, specifically singled out the Ottawa area for its work on consortia.

Downloading residual power from the emasculated, or effeminated, local authority on to parent councils will be an exercise in inefficiency. Parents are already overburdened by the demands of work and home. Disadvantaged areas where parent involvement is traditionally low — I've seen those school councils — will be served poorly by this proposal and will be at the mercy of special interest groups or rampant apathy. The proposal will favour affluent areas with highly educated, motivated parents, who will come together to form strong councils. Is this truly the equity that this government seeks?

I support parent representation and input on educational and budget advisory and working committees at the board level, but I do not support parents taking over the role of school boards as unpaid volunteers. Centralizing authority at Queen's Park may work well in those few places where local authority is totally incompetent or has abused its power, but these are the exceptions, not the rule.

Here in Ottawa, for example, we have a good system that works and is locally funded. I had difficulty deciding whether it is or was. To impose unilaterally such a dictatorial system on our jurisdiction, which has been effective and is supported by the majority of parents and taxpayers, goes against the grain of all notions of citizenship that we have grown up with in Canada, and in particular in our province of Ontario. Here in Ontario we have been blessed with successive governments, whatever their political stripe, that have looked for consensus within the populace when they undertook legislative change. They understood that slow, incremental progress meant lasting acceptance of whatever changes were wrought. You can't put a square peg in a round hole. This heavy-handed solution does not fit us as a province and will create wounds that may never heal.

Mr Snobelen tells us that Ontario pays \$500 more per pupil than the average of the other provinces and that this must be reduced. He does not consider relevant the fact that Ontario's cost of living is about 12% higher than the Canadian average. Notwithstanding that, Ontario's per pupil education funding ranks sixth behind Quebec,

Manitoba, British Columbia, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. Mr Snobelen also dares not mention that Ontario's expenditure ranks 46th lowest among 63 jurisdictions in North America.

The government has wrongly insisted on distinguishing between inside- and outside-the-classroom expenditure, as if there is not an integral relationship between the two, just so that it could have a false justification for removing money from the education system. This will seriously undermine the network of supports that are essential for quality education in the classroom.

The government has also said that the education cuts it has already instituted represent only 1.8% of the education budget, when that really isn't the case. The percentage is actually much higher, averaging 10% of the budget when funds collected locally for education are

factored out.

For those of you in government who don't send your children to private school, think about the human deficits in your children and in all the children of Ontario that your actions are and will be creating. The seemingly innocuous proposal of dropping junior kindergarten is one example. Research shows that one of the best investments one can make is junior kindergarten. It prevents costly intervention later on in high-risk children.

The Coalition for Public Education and People for Education have collected stories from parents about the effects of budget cuts on the classroom in Ontario. Many of these stories are heartrending. We will be releasing some of these stories next week. Some examples are included in the longer version of my presentation which

I have submitted.

Once Bill 104 creates a captive populace, the government will release how it will finance education. The government talks about equitable funding, which sounds like a really good idea on the surface, but the details will tell the tale. Quality education costs money. Quality education for disadvantaged children costs even more money. Given the government's track record, the government does not seem willing to pay for the quality equitable education that they seem to be espousing.

The government talks about funding everybody at the median level currently spent on education. If, as the government contends, there are serious deficits in the quality of education in this province, does it really make sense to fund at the median level? Will fewer teachers and larger classes really improve the quality of our children's education?

1910

The Chair: Mrs Dansky, can I ask you to wrap up,

please.

Mrs Dansky: Yes. The government seems to think that funding of pupils the same across the province is equitable. The problem is that the government is not thinking about the cost of programs and services which may differ from area to area across the province.

The Ottawa board, a system built over years, currently does a very good job meeting the needs of local students. The board takes great pains in funding programs and services adequately for its immigrant, disadvantaged and special needs students. Our populace as a whole supports that approach. Instead of recognizing this, the government

seems bent on sacrificing this essentially good system for a one-size-fits-all system that will impact negatively on our children for years to come. Frankly, it is very sad.

In the government's double-speak, the word "quality" means mediocrity. Mediocre sameness will not serve our children well with the demands of the 21st century, in the same way as in the broader scheme of things genetic diversity is essential if the species is to survive and flourish.

The bottom line is that the government is talking about removing \$1 billion from the eduction system. This money will be used for the Tory tax cut for the wealthy. How the rest of the money is allocated is important but not the central point. A billion dollars taken out of the education system will, by definition, further compromise the quality of our children's education, which is already reeling from the effects of previous cuts. To lose sight of this central fact is to blind ourselves to the harm we are about to do to our children and to our society that we worked so hard to build.

Bill 104 should be scrapped. Instead, the government should consult with parents and educators about how to ensure essential school programs and services that are adequately funded across the province.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs Dansky, for your presentation. Thank you for being with us this evening.

#### LES BUNNING

The Chair: Les Bunning? Welcome, Mr Bunning. We look forward to your presentation. You have 10 minutes in which to make it.

Mr Les Bunning: Thank you. I doubt my presentation is going to last 10 minutes. I'm not here to represent any special interest group. I'm here to support the amalgamation, in particular, of the Ottawa and the Carleton boards. I am a parent and I have four children. Two of them have been through the school system and two are presently going through the system.

Mr Wildman: You're an interest group.

Mr Bunning: Perhaps I am. In that sense, of course, any parent is an interest group.

The present system, to put it mildly, is simply a waste of money. I live on a small street, for example, that has 24 houses on it, and there are at least 10 buses that go through that street every morning. That's through the street. I'm not talking about the ones that go across the street and down the road where one of my children catches the bus. It's this sort of waste - of course, I don't know whether amalgamating the school board is going to actually change this sort of waste, but I hope the idea that we have to cut this kind of waste will come through.

In the past, one of my children was in special education. Because we're in the Carleton board and we live in the east end, he had to travel all the way to the west end to get the special services he required. They were available downtown, much closer, but of course that was the Ottawa board, and because we lived in the Carleton board, which, as you know, rings Ottawa, he had to travel all that way.

It's obvious that amalgamating the Ottawa board and the Carleton board makes sense. I urge this committee to not take too much notice of these special interest groups that are saying don't make any changes, don't do this, don't do that. Changes are needed. They're needed so that we can reduce the cost of education so that our property taxes can be lowered. I'm requesting the committee, please resist these interest groups; please go ahead and make these changes. They're changes that are badly needed.

Mr Patten: Mr Bunning, what makes you think your property taxes will be lowered? If you've been following the proposal from the government, they are downloading and replacing that \$5.4 billion that they took off of education to centralize and they are now offering to the municipalities \$6.4 billion, \$1 billion extra, on that same property tax. So instead of now having a say in education locally, you will have a say in sewage, you will have a say in transit and you'll have a say in perhaps welfare. Are you pleased with that? And you will be paying more on the present basis of what's being considered.

Mr Bunning: There's only one taxpayer. If there's a saving in public money, it will benefit us all. I believe the reduction in bureaucracy which will be caused by the amalgamation of these boards will be useful, whether it goes directly into my pocket as property taxes or income

taxes or other taxes.

Mr Patten: It's a shell game.

Mrs McLeod: Do we have more time?

**The Chair:** I think we're going to pass on to the third party. Mr Bunning only has 10 minutes.

Mr Bunning: I don't have to be here the 10 minutes.

I don't mind finishing early.

Mrs McLeod: No, we had more questions.

Mr Bunning: Carry on.

The Chair: We still have to have two sets of questions. Mr Marchese.

Mr Marchese: Can you just tell me who you think

some of these interest groups are?

Mr Bunning: I haven't been here all day. I have to work for a living. I've just come this evening, but from what I've heard, there have been various interest groups. One group, I think CUPE, was opposed, for example, to privatizing services. I think privatizing services should be considered. That may not be the mandate of this committee, but —

Mr Marchese: I appreciate that. I just wanted to know from you who you thought the interest groups were, because a lot of the people who come in front of this committee are parents who take a great deal of time from their individual lives, many of whom, by the way, are working as independent people at home. They come because they're worried and many of these people are parents. Do you consider them interest groups as well? Do you think so: yes or no?

1020

Mr Bunning: Are you telling me that there haven't been special interest groups appearing here?

Mr Wildman: There have been teachers and trustees here.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: There are teachers, associations.

Mr Froese: He's badgering the witness.

Mr Bunning: That's right. I'm sure that trustees and so on would form —

Mr Marchese: So all these other people before you, and you haven't heard them, they're all interest groups except people like you who want reductions in education?

Mr Bunning: That's not what I said.

Mr Marchese: Okay. You say changes are needed because you want to reduce your property taxes, and so you see this bill — you've read this bill, have you?

Mr Bunning: No.

The Chair: We'll pass on to the government caucus.

Mr Marchese: We're running out of time.

Mr Bunning: I haven't read the bill but I've read the

reports.

Mr Froese: Thank you for coming. In my riding, a lot of the parents have — and like we've heard today, there are differences of opinion. There are people who have spoken against the bill who have children and are concerned about it, and there are people like myself. I have four children too and I'm just as concerned as they are but we think differently, and that's okay. That's why we have the democratic system. A lot of parents in the St Catharines, Niagara-on-the-Lake area are concerned like you are about some of the bureaucratic duplication and the buildings that we have and that those dollars aren't going into the classroom. They're going into buildings and they should be going into the classroom. They're expressing a concern that that needs to be fixed, like you're saying.

Interjections.

The Chair: Ladies.

**Mr Froese:** Thank you. We've been patient with their presentation. I would appreciate the same courtesy.

Interjections.

The Chair: Excuse me just a second. We've been through this before. People have a right to express their views in this committee. Not everyone will agree with either side, or even more than one side, but you must allow them the opportunity to express their views.

Mr Froese: I'm trying to figure out from those people who are opposed to Bill 104: How does the reduction of school trustees, the reduction of boards, affect the relationship that we're all concerned about in the classroom? I'm trying to buy the argument. How is reducing the trustees, reducing the number of boards and increasing or strengthening the parent councils with the involvement in their schools, in your opinion, going to affect and hinder that classroom relationship with the teacher and the student?

**Mr Bunning:** I don't think it will hinder it at all. It's going to simply save taxpayers' dollars because of the reduction in the duplication and overlap.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr Bunning, for being here this evening.

## ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' FEDERATION

The Chair: May I call upon the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, district 21, Mr McEwen. Welcome. You are the last but by no means the least, and I assure you that the committee is most anxious to hear

what you have to say. May I ask you to present your copresenter for the record.

Mr John McEwen: Certainly. My name is John McEwen, and with me is Greg McGillis. Greg is the first vice-president. I would hasten to assure the committee that we have read the bill.

I'm really grateful for the hearing that you're giving us this evening. I know it's late and you've had a long day and folks have not necessarily been kind all of the time, but we are pleased that you offered us this opportunity, especially when we realize that other folks who wished to come could not.

We serve approximately 350 teachers who teach about 5,600 of the 12,400 students in the SD&G public board of education. We are proud of the tradition of publicly funded education in Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. I have to say that there was public education in Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry before there was a government of Ontario. Before there were roads, before there were municipal organizations, there were people who came together and said, "We want our kids to be educated well," and that tradition is one that has stayed with us. We bring ourselves to this meeting from that perspective, a perspective of 200-odd years of publicly funded education in SD&G.

We would like to focus in on a part of the long title of the bill. The phrase that I've chosen is "An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system." We'd like to address those issues, but first we'd like to talk a bit about the new board. You've heard some of this discussion already. It's a large board. It's almost 12,000 square kilometres. It's an L-shaped region of rural municipalities and villages and small towns, and as you heard earlier, it takes quite a while to cover the miles between one area and another. This new board is twice the size of Prince Edward Island. If you took Rhode Island, Delaware and the seven smallest European countries, you'd have almost enough room to stick Luxembourg in too. It's a fairly big place.

The board will serve 275,000 people. There will be 39,000 students. If we compare that with North American averages, even the Ontario average under the new system would be 30,000 students. But if you look at some of the other jurisdictions in North America — the United States and Canada — the average size of a school board is much smaller. To give some emphasis to that, there are three counties in upstate New York, and those three counties have about the same size population; they have about the same size enrolment. The territory is a bit bigger. It's the same kind of area: small farms, villages, rural municipalities. They have 32 school districts and four regional service delivery areas.

We are very concerned about the ability of this megaboard to manage its affairs. We frankly feel that the SD&G board of itself is fairly large geographically and in terms of enrolment and that it should not be merged at all. But you heard our employer today. They favour a merger with Prescott-Russell, and if given the choice between this L-shaped board and a merger with Prescott-Russell, the Prescott-Russell merger makes more sense. There are other regional structures like the LTAB region 1 board that cover the same area, and so we would

prefer, frankly, a merger with Prescott-Russell over the L-shaped board.

The question of accountability: Traditionally a school board has been accountable to the community it serves through an independent elected board of trustees, the board having the power to determine the budget, the nature and amount of its expenditures, subject to the provisions of the Education Act and its regulations. If the board's expenditure is improper, the community has been, I can tell you from personal experience, all too willing to criticize either the nature of the expenditure or the amount of the expenditure. In my school board, a board chair about four or five years ago got into terrible trouble for spending \$30,000 to renovate a room. It was the board meeting room, but that person was hung, drawn and quartered and run out of town.

I believe our school board, and that's the only experience I can draw from, is responsive to its community and changes its mind at the request of the community in a fashion that I sometimes don't see with federal and provincial governments.

1930

Does Bill 104 enhance the accountability of the school board? We think not. With the loss of taxing power, the school boards become merely agents of the provincial government and will not be able to respond to the wishes of their constituents. The larger geographical area will increase the sense of isolation that individual citizens have with the school board and it will be harder for the trustees to know what the community wants, let alone have the community impose its will upon the trustees.

I'm also concerned that large sectors of our society will be shut out from serving on school boards. We have one trustee who is a working mother. She juggles her life so that she can go from her office to school board meetings at 4:30, and the board accommodates its arrangements so that she can do that. I don't think she will be able to be a trustee in this new consolidated board. She'll be shut out. It will be left to the affluent, the self-employed, the comfortably retired. Those are interest groups too, but they don't represent the whole community.

In terms of effectiveness, we had a little trouble with this. We went to our dictionary and we wondered if really the framers of the legislation weren't talking about efficiency instead. So we looked at the question of efficiency and we wondered, in practical terms, are there savings to be found from the amalgamation of school boards?

The short-term transitional costs — employee buyouts, relocation costs, construction and renovation costs — probably will wipe out any savings you might find immediately. There is, however, solid research evidence that suggests that new, larger school boards may not be as effective as the old ones. Stephen B. Lawton, who is known to the Ministry of Education — the Ministry of Education uses him from time to time for research — has in his book Financing Canadian Education referred to some studies conducted in British Columbia, New Jersey and Illinois that find that small school boards with an average wealth are most effective in producing high academic achievement. He also observed that there are diseconomies of scale. Yes, if you want to consolidate

school boards of under 1,000, you can produce efficiencies by doing that, but you start losing the benefit of economies of scale, and by the time you get to 50,000, which is the ballpark we're playing in here, it starts to cost you more.

Based on Lawton's work, I would argue that the 32 school districts in upstate New York are probably more efficient than the mega-board we're contemplating and possibly more efficient than the existing enlarged school boards.

That impression was confirmed for me two weeks ago when I sat down with officials interested in school finance from Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and British Columbia. In some jurisdictions they said the buyout costs and other consolidation costs were high. In other places they said no, they were moderate. But no one could see any cost savings. It is highly unlikely that Bill 104 will contribute to the bill's imputed goal of enhancing efficiency.

Quality: What's meant by the quality of a school system? We submit that the availability of sound, varied educational opportunities for students, the ability of a large proportion of the students to proceed successfully to graduation, and the knowledge and the abilities of the system's graduates are a fair measure of that quality. These broadly are measures of outcome.

What does Bill 104 offer to enhance that quality? We don't believe there's very much. Does it free up resources that can be used in schools? Based on the Lawton research, we don't think so. We think the opposite's going to occur: Dollars will be drained from the schools.

I apologize for the "not a question." My editor was trying to make me clean up my act and his editorial reference to me did not get deleted from the final text.

Will Bill 104 enhance the community's interest or involvement in schools? Again, we fear not. We fear there will be a greater distance between the community and its school boards, and school councils can't do the job. You've heard that today from a number of sources.

Will Bill 104 enhance administrative oversight of our schools? Again, we believe not. In fact, we think there's a Hobson's choice here: You can choose to spend more money for administrators to operate this larger system, as the Lawton studies seem to suggest occurs, or you can agree to have unsupervised schools. That is problematic, we think

In our opinion, Bill 104 and the associated school finance reforms will not deliver on the stated goals of improvement in accountability, effectiveness and quality. We recommend, for that reason, that it be withdrawn.

Before closing, and you've been quite kind to listen to us at this hour, we'd like very briefly to make a couple of observations about the transition process. I will be quick, because you've heard them before.

We are deeply troubled at the unilateral powers handed to the Education Improvement Commission. We do not find those powers, nor the insulation of the decisions of that board from judicial reference, to be compatible with a society such as ours.

Finally, we also observe that we are concerned about the absence of any specific guarantees of contractual rights for school board employees in the merger process.

In our review of Bill 104 we've come to understand that it and the associated finance reforms will not deliver the bill's stated goals. We fear that the opposite will be true, that the enactment of the legislation will have the opposite effect. We recommend it be withdrawn.

I thank you for your time tonight. If we have a moment, Mr McGillis will review our recommendations.

The Chair: We have a moment.

Mr McEwen: Mr McGillis, review our recommendations.

Mr Greg McGillis: Recommendation 1: That the amalgamation of the four enlarged school boards to form the Lanark, Leeds and Grenville, Prescott and Russell, Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry English-language public district school board not proceed.

Recommendation 2: That if any merger involving the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry public board of education were to take place, the board should be combined with the Prescott-Russell board.

Recommendation 3: That Bill 104 be withdrawn.

Recommendation 4: In the event that Bill 104 is not withdrawn, suspend the operation of the Education Improvement Commission and replace it with a process which respects the role of the judiciary and which operates within the rule of law.

Recommendation 5: In the event that Bill 104 is not withdrawn, there should be present in the legislation a clear definition of school board employee contractual rights during the transition to the new district boards.

The Chair: Mr McEwen and Mr McGillis, we want to thank you very much for being here tonight and presenting the views of the OSSTF. Very good of you to be here.

Ladies and gentlemen, I just want to remind you that there is a shuttle bus that is waiting to take us to the airport, and we will meet again tomorrow morning at 11:30 in Thunder Bay. We are adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1939.



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# Substitutions present / Membres remplaçants présents:

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne PC)

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York ND)

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South / -Sud PC)

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East / -Est PC)

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre / -Centre L)

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North / -Nord PC)

## Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes:

Mr Robert Chiarelli (Ottawa West / -Ouest L)

Mr Bernard Grandmaître (Ottawa East / -Est L)

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell L)

Clerk / Greffière: Ms Tonia Grannum

Staff / Personnel: Mr Ted Glenn, research officer, Legislative Research Service

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